

# **JANSE DOUW'S DESCENDANTS**

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# Janse Douw's Descendants

## I

In the quiet days toward the end of the last century, when automobiles were not yet spinning through the city streets and country roads, and before the many foreign faces had so changed the aspect of our country, there were few more untroubled spots than Setauket, a quaint, shady old port on the Eastern coast. The little place seldom looked prettier than it did in early autumn, when gentians and goldenrod had succeeded to daisies and buttercups in the pastures—and Setauket still had pastures—and when the distant horizons began to be softened by that purple haziness that seems like a bloom upon the ripened fruit of the year. The handsome residence of Ex-Secretary Casgrove showed to especial advantage; and the fine lawn and glowing beds of flowers were sure to call forth admiring comments from the occupants of the carriages that drove down Bedford Street on any of these pleasant afternoons. People who turned their heads to seize again the inviting picture, were quite likely to remind each other of the important item of intelligence contained in the morning paper, as explaining the more inhabitable air about the place. The same people would be apt, in continuing their drive, to look with equal or greater interest at the old Dow mansion, which was too solid and imposing not

to hold its own against upstart elegance, in spite of its gloomy appearance.

The first coming of Secretary Casgrove to Setauket in search of a quiet spot in which to pass his summers, or more strictly speaking, those parts of the year when he was not in Washington or abroad, had stirred that small portion of the polite world to its center. But when he purchased the old Sprague place, lying in neglected, weedy gardens on the same street with the Dow mansion, the townspeople were almost disposed to regret his coming, when they were forced to look on at the irreverent way in which he transformed the spot, doing away with one of their landmarks. For these two old dwellings, built with so much of fine, burgher-like respectability, and suggestive of past consequence, had been a distinctive feature of the village; and a lively fancy had found it easy to conjure up from their appearance something of its vanished history.

And yet the interest felt in these two old places was of an entirely different character, and the open lawns and sunshiny aspect of the one were typical of its freedom from the dark family annals of which the other house seemed to keep counsel within the confines of its high iron fences, and in the midst of its dense shrubberies.

On this lovely day in August there was, as it happened, a natural connection of ideas between the two; for the same morning journal that had enlightened the village world as to the fact of the great man's presence among them, had published the names of his guests, and among them that bright, well-known society woman, Mrs. Frank Dow. John Hayden, this lady's father, had always been a *confrère* of Casgrove's; and the



latter, with sons married, had made Millie Hayden an especial pet and favorite. It was when trying to fill the void left in his house by the daughter he had lost, that Millie Hayden had first met her future husband, the widow Dow's only son, Frank. The marriage which soon resulted, was at first kindly received by the widow; but it was not long before trouble arose that caused almost a complete break between mother and son. Current gossip, flashing by a sort of telegraphy through the upper social strata of the little port, predicted that the elder Mrs. Dow was still too angry to take any notice of her daughter-in-law's coming.

"Don't you know? It's a very strange thing. Comes, it is said, from his having speculated with some of the Dow property. Yes, nobody understands it, for everybody supposed Frank was to have the Dow property, as a matter of course. No, Nathaniel wouldn't look at it. It was left unreservedly to the widow, you know." So ran gossip. "Singular she should be so miserly. It is said she lives clear within her income. And people thought she quite worshipped Frank! But she loves her ducats more, it seems."

The widow Dow, meantime, quite unconscious of being in this case the object of conjecture, though well inured to it in general, was seated near one of the windows in the large sitting-room of Dow House, intent upon the making of some articles that from their plain, rough texture were evidently garments for the poor. There was noticeable about her as she turned and shaped them a brisk energy.

She was thinking of rather a lively discussion she had had with one of the Board of Directors

of the Quisette Orphan Asylum in regard to a step those gentlemen had contemplated. The widow had decidedly objected to it from the first, and she shook her head as she thought it over, fortifying her position with new arguments she would bring to bear. There was not much doubt that when these potential utterances should be heard they would have their due weight. So absorbed had she become in her thoughts that she did not notice how rapidly the sky was clouding over. Outside of the window a large elm swayed and swept its long, pendulous green branches down till they sometimes touched the pane; but the widow paid no heed until she was startled by the slamming of a blind close beside her. The tall trees bent and surged in the sudden gust of wind that brought the drops with it. Mrs. Dow rose to push back the shutter, and as she did so she saw a carriage passing swiftly, drawn by two slender, finely-groomed black horses. The coachman wore livery, and the vehicle had two occupants: a gentleman with a grey beard, and a young girl who was endeavoring with difficulty to throw about her shoulders a light wrap that fluttered in the breeze.

At this moment Eliza Jakway entered from the garden, where she had been directing the operations of a new gardener. The supervision of this work had been given over to her, as she was fond of flowers and had an inborn skill in their nurture. It was due to her that the old place was kept up with a neatness that did much to rob it, in the eyes of the more youthful and impressionable part of the population, of the mystery that had so long clustered around it.



And though a few bright glimpses were about all that reached the eye of the outside world through the jealous guardianship of the close fences and high, wide-spreading trees, inside the generally improved effect certainly did her efforts credit. Nature was not to be cheated out of this hour of her proud maturity, even in the shadow of this memory-haunted old house; and the garden ran riot in color. The rows of trained sunflowers at the farther end were in their full perfection, turning out quaint, big discs, like moony, rustic faces, toward the beholder; clematis massed its richness over the trellis between the lawn and garden, nasturtiums and other autumnal flowers blossomed in profusion, and rivalled, with their varied shades, the glowing border of geranium that furnished a contrast to the still fresh green of the lawn by its line of vivid scarlet, relieved against the grey masonry of one side of the house.

They had been left without a gardener for several weeks, as the last man, a Scotchman with the failings of his race, had gone on a more protracted spree than usual, and Mrs. Dow had been obliged to discharge him. The new hand, a taciturn man, with the most of his face concealed by a heavy beard, had given his young mistress some trouble. He seemed to her surly and inattentive; then surprised her by asking what relation she might be to the lady of the house.

"I am her cousin," the girl replied, manifesting a touch of resentment that the furtive observation of which she had been conscious had had the boldness to express itself in words. "Why did you care to know?" she asked, in her turn.

The man gave an awkward attempt at a laugh

as he turned away. "No offense, Miss. I was only a bit curious. You see I hardly thought you could be her daughter; you and she don't look so much alike."

"When did you see Mrs. Dow? I wasn't aware you knew her by sight," said the young lady, quickly, displeased by the man's way, she hardly knew why.

"No, I never knew her," he made haste to say, rather eagerly. "I saw her once when I put in here on a boat. It was a smack from New Bedford."

"Oh!" said the girl. The explanation seemed to her reasonable. It allayed her suspicions.

"They told me then she was the beauty of the village," added the man. "You ain't much like her, Miss."

"You think differently from most people. I am generally considered very much like her," Eliza said, with youthful pique she was all the more ready to betray in that she had already so little liked her colloquist. Receiving no answer she waived aside the subject with a dignity intended to emphasize this feeling, as she repeated her instructions with great particularity. The whistle of a locomotive that just then pierced the air, evidently entering the precincts of the little town, and the blue wreaths of smoke that could be seen curling above the treetops, changed the current of her thoughts. As she looked around, she became aware of the approach of the storm.

"Well, you needn't mind that now; you can't work long," she said, hurriedly. "I see it is going to rain. You may begin here tomorrow," and she left him tranquilly turning up the soil in the



borders, and hastened toward the house, running before the fast coming drops. That whistle had told of possibilities that filled her mind with pleasurable anticipations.

She was met by her cousin's voice as she entered the house. "Run, Eliza, and see who that was! Upon my word, I believe it was Millie Dow," said the widow, who, being the one in Setauket most interested, was naturally one of the few who had not seen the morning's announcement. If, remembering that tragedy of the past, the stranger should look for a heroine of romance in Mrs. Dow, his visions would be very likely to crumble at once at the sound of her clear, but eminently practical tone of voice. And, indeed, few people lived more emphatically in an everyday world of realities than she.

Eliza did as she was requested; but, though she obligingly flattened her delicate nose against the pane she could only see the shining, rapidly revolving wheels, and the two heads over the back of the carriage, as it disappeared in the distance. The people on Bedford Street were beginning to put up their umbrellas. One of these last stopped in front of the gate and, with a pair of long legs beneath, came in between the two stone posts with the carved lions that gave such an imposing aspect to the entrance.

"Who was that with our 'distinguished fellow townsman' Nat?" called out the widow, on hearing the front door open.

"Not having seen the lady's face, I can only surmise; but upon the authority of the 'Daily Banner,' I should say it must have been a connection of yours, Aunt Florence," returned the

voice from outside, where Nathaniel was putting his umbrella into the hat-rack.

"So we thought. What is she here for, do you suppose?"

"Bearding the lion in his den, I should judge," said the newcomer, as he emerged from the hall. "But I don't pretend to decipher the enigma. You must find some other Daniel."

As well as could be seen in the growing dusk of the room he was a substantial looking young man, with light hair curling slightly over a rather large head, and with an open, candid look and careless ease, that, refined, as they were, by a different life and higher culture, yet told of a seafaring ancestry. His pleasantry was met by a laugh from the lion, who had let her work fall, and now looked somewhat formidable, as she became fixed in a self-forgetful attitude. Eliza had been flying about the house with one of the maids to see that the windows on the side from which the storm came were closed. As she came in now her heart was beating more rapidly than usual, and her color was brighter; whether from the quick descent and exertion or from some other cause, it would be hard to say. Nathaniel's glance of expectancy, which had so far been unrewarded since his entrance, brightened into a particularly pleasant smile of greeting in response to her own.

"I saw you out in the garden, as I came over through the dummytrack," he said, designating a short cut to that part of the town much traversed by the men who went in and out of the city upon business daily. It was not a suggestive remark, yet something in the manner of saying it was sufficient to deepen Eliza's ready color. She looked prettier, he thought, than he had ever



seen her before, as she stood laying off her scoop hat and garden gloves, with her cheeks rosy from exercise, and a great bunch of sweet peas in the bodice of her white dress.

"I didn't see you," she smiled. "I was out directing our new gardener."

"What sort of a man does he seem to be, Eliza?" asked the widow, rousing from her reverie.

"Decidedly stupid, I should say," said Eliza. "I told him several times about things, but I don't believe he knows now what I wanted of him. He watched me in rather an odd way, I thought, and seemed so inquisitive. He seemed to be thinking more of me than of what I was saying."

"You shouldn't be so hard upon him for such a purely natural failing," interposed Nathaniel.

Eliza laughed and blushed consciously, wrinkling the clear line of her eyebrows to dispose of the blush.

"I'm afraid we shan't feel the same confidence in him that we did in Andrew," said she, with some embarrassment. Her secluded life had made her diffident, and she was unused to parrying compliments. "I don't know how it would be if we were to be left alone with him."

"Nat mustn't go and leave us. He must settle down here. I've always told him it was the place for him," said Mrs. Dow, with an eye on Nathaniel. The friendly glances these young people were exchanging were not lost upon her. The young man only laughed as he went out into the hall on the way to his own room. He was used to being talked at in this way by his aunt. "What is his name?" she added, to her cousin.

"Martin, he said. Oh, here he is now! What can he want of me?" And Miss Jakway rose, and, with an air of some vexation, went out upon the veranda. At the first sound of the man's gruff voice the woman inside lifted her head with a sudden start. She walked far enough to catch sight of the slouching, roughly-dressed figure of the man who stood talking with Eliza, then turned away.

"Strange," murmured she, "that those old memories should be so stirred tonight. There seems to be something in the air. No, it can be only fancy," and when the young lady came in the blinds were drawn down, and a bright light had taken the place of the darkening prospect outside and the gathering dimness within.

"I think I understand this move, Eliza," said her cousin. "Frank expects that Millie and I will meet somewhere, that Millie's pretty face will plead for her, and the old woman's heart will be softened. I wonder what has become of that ungrateful boy of mine, and why he didn't come with her. I suppose he's still occupied with his mines, or some other wild scheme. Well, at any rate, you must go up there and call, Eliza."

"Don't you intend to go yourself, Cousin Florence?"

"No, if she wants to see me she can come here. I do not intend to apologize for what I have said. I meant it. I think that she, in her selfish ambition, and that worldly, unscrupulous father of hers, are having a very bad influence over Frank. I am very sorry to see it. I cannot forgive them for it."

Frank Dow had been a boy of five or six years when his mother—this woman sitting so quietly



in the large, comfortable room—had had the iron hand of the law laid upon her, and had been tried for the murder of her husband, who had been mysteriously shot in his own garden. She had been acquitted after a hard contest, for appearances were against her. But, though at first some among the large and indifferent public had expressed doubts of the justice of the verdict, the talk about her had soon died out, excepting for a whisper now and then in the ears of a stranger of that tragedy of the past. But the woman's soul had been too deeply seared by the terrible ordeal through which she had passed for her ever to be quite herself again, and she had sought an unwholesome seclusion from the world, she and her husband's sister, Margaret Dow, who had stood staunchly by her through it all, growing in time a little peculiar and morbid from their mode of life, as was almost inevitable.

Twenty years had elapsed since this tragic event, and Dow House, as it had come to be called in concession to its being the nearest to a manor house in the vicinity, still stood dark and silent behind its tall, iron fences, and in the shade of its fine old trees. A high monument had been erected to the memory of Thomas Dow, in among the other tall tombstones in the graveyard opposite, and its broken marble shaft could generally be seen gleaming through the dusk of evening, and often gave Eliza Jakway, whom Mrs. Dow had later taken to live with her as a companion, a start as she looked out and saw it. Yet there was a sort of strange companionship about it too, as if the careless, free, kindly man were still among them, and the girl, who found her life odd and lonely, had not that kind of timidity. It

was the widow who could never get over a slight repugnance to the place, that had its origin, perhaps, in an awe that had survived girlhood for the spot of all others where one was least able to forget the dark annals of the family.

There was one person, however, to whom Dow House had never seemed dark and forbidding. This was the widow's son, who, according to his stepfather's wishes, had been always known by the name of Dow. He had grown to be a tall, fine-looking, clever young fellow, with his mother's bright, resolute spirit, but with an enthusiastic, visionary element in him such as she had never had. Perhaps the influence of the shut-in old house, with its corners haunted sometimes by idle myths, sometimes by ghostly memories, had done much to foster this. But, at least he loved the old place, and remembering Thomas Dow's frequent promises to him, and how great a favorite he had been with him, he regarded this as a right. It was like no other place to him, with its full and rich, though sombre, background of associations, and he did not realize that it was a shadowy spot. His mother had seen this with a mixture of pleasure and regret; pleasure that home had been so dear to him, yet regret for the direction in which his wishes so plainly pointed.

"Frank, you must make your own fortune. Don't expect or look for anything from the past, excepting what little came from your father, of course. I thank Heaven you are a Nicholls," she told him, in her decided way. "There is nothing I have a more thorough contempt for than these old fossilized families who have obtained possession of a little money and cling to it, to any



extent, generation in and out. It's a man's privilege to make his own way. And the Dow property was never honest gains. I hope you will never soil your fingers with it."

Life had been too bright to the young man, too full of promise and of that courage of hope and confidence that makes it easy for the young to conquer all things for themselves, for him to attach any great importance to this prohibition. Difficult as it was to reconcile himself to what he deemed a womanish scruple, he had learned to respect it, and to urge her no more upon the subject. When he grew older and returned from college his mother had entrusted the management of the property, as well as of her own small fortune, to his care, feeling, as a widowed mother naturally would, a fond pride in being able to avail herself, at last, of the prop and stay that she trusts will henceforth be hers.

Things had gone on so for a year or two when Frank, during a short stay of a few weeks in the autumn in Setauket, had responded to an invitation to pass the evening at Secretary Casgrove's, and had there made the acquaintance of the young lady whom he soon afterwards married. Millie Hayden was the daughter of a man who was one of a type, mixed politician, financier, statesman, adventurer, able to pull wires in many different directions and also to exert some genuine influence founded on real abilities in several, perhaps more peculiarly a product of our own state of society than of that of any other land. One of the first effects of his new relationship—an uncongenial and disappointing one to the widow, though she had striven to make the best of it—was to unsettle Frank Dow in his plans and purposes, and

persuade him to abandon the law and unite in the promising western speculations in which his father-in-law was already deeply interested. Mrs. Dow grew more and more indignant at the new course of things. It seemed to her hard, indeed, that her son should be so completely under the domination of the opinions and wishes of others, and should disregard her own; that son to whom she had looked for consolation, as her only stay in life and the comfort of her old age. To Frank, her firmness in regard to the house had been the first cause of alienation between them. He could not help feeling that his mother had not had his interests at heart as deeply as she should have had when she could give preference to a mere whim of her own to his disadvantage. This feeling of injury had unconsciously rankled, and it had left him more open to the unwise representations of his wife and the interested counsels of his father-in-law. But it was not until Mrs. Dow found that Frank, in his mining speculations, had managed to implicate the Dow property, which he held in trust, that her son encountered an inflexibility of purpose and principle such as he had known little of before. She would listen to no palliation, consent to no compromise, believe in no visions of future returns, think of accepting none.

“You had no right to touch it, Frank,” she said. “Of what I have myself I give you all I can and welcome. But this money I have always regarded as a trust. It is Dow money, not ours. It was ill-gotten gains, always. I cannot bear to have you taint your fingers with it. I will not have it, Frank, and the only way is to put the temptation out of your reach. There was no



excuse for your using it. You understood perfectly how I regarded this. Have I not told you how I felt?"

It seemed to her son like an absurd superstition, quite unworthy of a woman of her strength of mind, but he found no way of combating it. He had trusted that the sequel would so justify his course by the success of his ventures as to overcome his mother's opposition; but the sequel lagged and her conduct at this juncture made it plain that he need indulge in no such hope. When she called upon his cousin Nathaniel to become her man of business, he was so deeply chagrined and so bitterly aggrieved at what he considered the injustice she showed toward him, that almost a complete break had ensued between mother and son. In spite of his tendency toward extravagance, Frank Dow was a son to be proud of; and his mother had hitherto shown herself to be so fond and indulgent that her sudden severity seemed as uncalled for as it was strange. Was it remorse? questioned the curious, knowing the past.

## II

It was the custom to have dinner late at the Dow's; and as Nathaniel had been expected, the widow had made extra preparations for him and had his favorite dishes on the table.

His coming seemed to infuse new life into the house. Aunt Margaret Dow, now a sallow-faced woman of about fifty, always brightened, as the widow did, at Nathaniel's presence. She had been injured some years since in getting out of a carriage by the sudden starting of a pair of high-mettled horses, and walked with the assistance of a cane. She came hobbling in, smiling and holding out her hand in delighted greeting. Both she and the widow looked upon Nathaniel as the real head of the house, and destined him, in their wishes and plans, to be its future owner.

"How goes the city, Nat?" the widow inquired, as they sat down to the dinner table.

"The city is teeming and humming like a hive," said the young man, "men rushing in every different direction, everywhere a perfect drive and push. When I get into the crowd I drive and rush with them, without thinking why I do it. It is difficult to be a looker-on in New York. One finds oneself borne along the current. It seems like a sort of Elysium to get out here, out of the rush and roar. One would have ten years' additional lease of life to live here."

"That's what I've always been telling you," said Mrs. Dow, smiling with eager persuasiveness.

"There's room for a promising young lawyer in Setauket. I've always told you so."

"Settle down and be a country attorney," smiled Nathaniel. "Where'd be the promise then, Aunt Florence? Jennings doesn't appear any too prosperous."

"But why do you take Jennings as a criterion?" remonstrated she. "Jennings is a skin-flint and everybody knows it. Such men as he never do well anywhere. It is only just retribution that they should not." Jennings was the synonym for all that was mean and underhand among the legal fraternity of Setauket. "But the Suydams, father and son, seem to succeed."

"With everything in their favor," said he, as he carved the roast of mutton. "They were naturally located here because all their interests were here and it gave them an advantage such as no other man could obtain. Besides, they are neither of them dependent upon their profession."

"Nor need you be," she found time to say. He rejected it all laughingly, taking no notice of her last remark.

"They are as exceptional as Jennings," said he. "Jennings is a product. Such a man as he required favorable conditions. You're too primitive out here. Think of having your flour ground by a tidemill!"

"Oh, we don't! Not now," objected Eliza Jakway, not able to keep silent longer.

"Don't you? Well, you did a few years ago. No, my mind is imbued with too much sense of the power they possess down here to choke the breath of life out of anything like progress, to dare to try the experiment. Any warm human



faculties are doomed to inevitable rust in Suffolk, no matter how hopefully they start off."

Eliza Jakway listened silently. So that was the way he looked at them, repudiating Suffolk ways and Suffolk for himself! The inference was certainly not polite. She had not known Mr. Nathaniel Dow long. It was only since he had been made the widow's man of business that she had known him at all; and it was only lately, since the heated term had invested their situation on the seashore with attractions that spoke for themselves, and the widow's invitations had been more pressing for him to prolong his stay when he came, that his visits had been anything but brief and occasional. Before that, Mrs. Dow had been wont to run up to the city upon any business errands.

The New Yorker was unaware that his view of this most old foggy of communities could be regarded as anything but matter-of-course, though he considered that the old-fogyism was not without a picturesqueness that recommended it to artists, and a peacefulness that made a few days passed there exceedingly restful to the nerves of city people.

"Perhaps I shouldn't be any better than Jennings if I subjected myself to the same influences," continued he. "The life in a country town is narrowing, if it is conducive to longevity; and I believe there's even some doubt upon that score. No, I take issue with Cowper. I think God made the town as well as the country, and he made it a good deal broader. Whose manufacture is this salad, Aunt Florence? It does them credit, whoever it is."

“You must give Eliza all the credit of that,” said Mrs. Dow. “In fact, you can give her credit safely for a good many things. I wonder some man doesn’t find out her value. However, it is well for me they don’t.”

Eliza Jakway was especially annoyed to have attention called to her in this way. She colored painfully. She felt provincial to the tips of her fingers, although the young man laughed and made some light remark to the effect that probably the fact had not been unsuspected.

“It doesn’t take breadth of mind to make a good salad, Mr. Dow,” said she, rather to his surprise; and he saw that there was something of defiance in the little way in which she bridled as she said it.

“Well, now I think it does,” he objected, wondering what it was she was sensitive about. He had not thought of her as coming under the strictures upon Suffolk products, any more than of his aunt Florence. “Some of the greatest wits and literary men have been very proud of their success in concocting salads. I take it it’s rather a test of a high order of intelligence.”

Eliza did not answer, and at this point they heard a hearty voice in the hall and Capt. Jakway, Mrs. Dow’s father, came in for his evening game of cards, reporting, as he doffed his tarpaulins, that the violence of the storm was now over.

Tom Dow, who had been rather a wild young fellow, had married a young girl from among the common fisher population of the coast. In those early days she had often been seen helping her father, as a boy would have done, to run the sail ferry from the port to the small island in the bay; for, by such means as this, like many



old salts, the Captain had been obliged to eke out his rather scanty livelihood. After Florence's first marriage and widowhood, there had been no necessity for her doing this, and one after another of the Captain's numerous nephews had grown up to temporarily fill the place. But she had not lost her skill; and Tom Dow's fancy had been caught when encountering the pretty widow in her light boating costume sauntering up from the docks with her oars on her shoulder, having returned from skimming the bay and adjacent waters in the small craft that she managed herself. As one looked at Margaret Dow now, in her sallow middle age, it was hard to realize that she and her sister Cornelia had been so antagonistic to their brother's choice, designating these accomplishments as Amazonian, and condemning them, as they did the love of dress, and the free lively manners that had gathered around the youthful and dashing widow a numerous train of friends and admirers.

These had been young men in the same class of life as herself; and it was well known that when Tom Dow began to pay her attention she was the same as engaged to a young sailor named Jarvis Marshall. The disappointment and bitterness of this young Marshall had been extreme when his rich rival had been finally victorious, and the girl had broken faith with him, asserting her right to do so with a haughty independence that partly proceeded from a restive conscience. She had been too much dazzled to resist the bright visions fancy painted of social triumphs and pleasures, while her heart was completely taken captive by her lover's many attractions. For Tom Dow had plenty of personal charm, and her



untutored imagination was drawn rather than otherwise by his dare-devil reputation, for Mrs. Nicholls was a woman of spirit, and liked spirit in others.

It seemed like a mockery to talk of spirit after all these darkened, terrible years; yet Florence Dow was still a handsome woman, even though she showed some signs of the severe trial she had been through. Something of the old coquetry and pride in her appearance was suggested in the way that her mourning costume was skillfully adapted to set off her broad, but still trim and shapely figure; while the soft white with which she relieved its sombreness at the throat framed the rich brunette coloring of her face in the most effective way.

As for the old sailor himself, he was now a hale old man of seventy, and during his daughter's troubles had been her strongest support; and in the isolation of the years that had followed, a constant link with the free, simple life of her girlhood, which more than anything else had had the effect of a pure salt breeze in blowing away the miasmas of morbid feeling which were apt to gain undue ascendancy over her. "No one knows what Pa has been to me," she often said, with tears in her eyes, as she caught sight of his sturdy, honest old figure.

"What's the news, Mr. Dow?" asked the Captain, cheerily, as he seated himself in an easy chair, and Nathaniel opened out the large daily he had brought down with him from the city.

"Oh, I don't know. Let us see; 'disasters by flood and fire,' " the latter said. "The telegraphic news seems to be a record of coast storms and wrecks. Here's a clipper-ship ashore in a fog,

a steamer three days out and not been heard from—I don't know what else. It gives a man a queer idea of the world he lives in to glance over the columns of a daily paper."

"It's all that plaguey comet," said the Captain, disposed to attribute all that went wrong to this one agency, as to a sort of huge scapegoat; being especially of opinion that a comet that kept such unseasonable hours must be in league with all powers of diablerie.

They looked a very comfortable circle, indeed, as they sat down to a game of cards. And, however gloomy it might be outwardly, there was within the comfort that only seems to belong to large dwellings; a generous air only possible to wide halls and spacious apartments. All were playing, Eliza having been obliged to put down her fancy work, Nathaniel his paper, for the old sailor always demanded the good, old-fashioned round game of seven-up, looking forward to it from one evening to another with a keenness of relish only possible to those who have lived out the active interests and more absorbing emotions of life.

If anyone had told Margaret Dow, in days of yore, that she also would come to count upon these games as among the chief amusements of her life, she would probably have laughed the idea to scorn; yet enjoy them she did, with a childish pleasure almost as good to watch as the old sailor's keen hilarity, and thought little of the Captain's singular vernacular and his big, horny hands. Nor did she appear to mind the boisterous form that his enjoyment assumed, even though he shouted rather than spoke in the excitement of play, and brought his hand down when he pro-



duced a telling card with a force that made the slight table quiver, and drove Nathaniel, whose nerves were not as well inured to Capt. Jakway's style of playing as those of the rest, to laughingly shake his own fingers as if they had just suffered the ringing contact.

Yet there were unseen shadows, too; ghosts that would not be laid. Eliza could not forget that alienation between mother and son; it seemed to her now that she had been selfish to be unwilling to contribute, as far as lay in her power, toward a better understanding. What better mission could come to her, in her aimless and insignificant life—Eliza had imbibed enough of modern thought from reading to feel her own life culpably aimless—than healing this sore breach? She was a warm-hearted little thing, and had had no experience of the way that contact with the world and especially the lapse of time hardens our sensibilities, and enables us to bear with fortitude the estrangements that advancing years are so apt to bring with them. As she thought of all this, so thoughtful and sweet a look suddenly kindled her downcast face that Nathaniel's attention was arrested as by something altogether new to his perceptions.

Eliza Jakway possessed something of the same dark beauty as her cousin, but it was at the same time less perfect and more refined; and making all allowance for difference of age there was an immaturity about this slight, graceful girl, that was due to her quiet, secluded life, and that made her a woman very unlike what the older one must have been at twenty. There was this same coolness and softer shading about her hair and eyes, which were only brown where Mrs. Dow's were of raven



blackness; as if she were a reflex of the more brilliant and glowing youth of her cousin. It was not unusual for her to have moments of abstraction; and the old Captain now rapped her back into a consciousness of what was going on around, beating on the table, and shouting to her energetically that it was her turn to play.

"Come, come," said he. "Attend to what's in hand. You've got a chance to sell. Now, don't you let 'em beat you down! Put all your wits to work. Don't let's have any wool-gathering around here."

Eliza laughed and awoke to the idea that she was under observation with a perceptible start; and as she took up her cards and tried to advise herself as to the run of the game, she for the first time encountered Nathaniel's gaze. Nathaniel was as much troubled at this discovery as she. He hoped he had not made her any more shy and self-conscious, he thought, vexed at himself, for he had found her unapproachable enough before. He did admire her, but he had not meant to spoil her by letting her see it. He had leaned back before, taking his part with a tolerant good-nature, studying the scene and the characters about him. Now he threw himself into the game with well-feigned ardor, competing sharply with the captain over every point, bluffing it with rash intrepidity and adding vastly to its liveliness and interest.

Eliza was glad when the game came to an end and she was free to seek the friendly darkness of the veranda outside. Tom Dow's massive monument was gleaming white across the way. That monument exercised a sort of witchery over Eliza's mind. She was wondering at it all to-

night, wondering at the mystery of it, inwardly rebelling, in fact. The past has its tyrannical influence over the most of us; and she was thinking how the vigorous, active natures that went before had lived out their lives, sowing a seed of subtle results under which the present generation must labor. Hearing a step approaching, she was both disappointed and relieved to find that the tall figure that darkened the doorway was that of Miss Dow.

“There are an unusual number of lights on the Sound,” said that lady, as she moved along, leaning on her cane, her black silk dress faintly rustling, and seated herself in one of the porch chairs. “I don’t feel like going up to my room quite yet. I don’t know—I’ve felt rather nervous to-day. And then I thought I’d come out and let Florence and Nathaniel discuss business matters, if they wish to.” There was a moment’s pause. “I believe I ought not to have let Becky talk to me,” she continued. “I don’t often notice her chatter; but when she was cleaning my room to-day, I couldn’t help her running on about some of the old signs, and noises the servants have heard lately—tapping at the wing door, and one of the girls said she heard a footstep in the old yellow room; and she went in there and it was quite vacant. Of course it is all absurd, and the poor, credulous things will talk in that way (though Sarah is too intelligent a girl to allow herself to). She ought to check the other servants, on the contrary!” Sarah was the cook. “But it makes me feel a little fidgety, and I confess I didn’t like to sit alone,” and she laughed an apologetic little laugh, as people do when they are ashamed of betraying some weakness of mind.



"Yes, it is infectious," said Eliza, with a little shiver, not able wholly to resist the dark suggestions thus conjured up. "It is so easy to make oneself nervous and fanciful by listening to such things. Nothing we really know is very bad; it's only things that are suggested. It often seems to me that to live in this house is enough to take away all one's natural courage and common-sense, it is so eerie and ghostly. How can we be like other people in such an atmosphere?"

"But, my dear," responded the older woman, sinking her voice, "there have been two deaths in the neighborhood, and I never knew the old saying that there will be a third to fail to come true. That gives a shadow of foundation for what the servants say, for you must allow that it has more substance than most superstitions."

"Oh, Aunt Margaret," said the girl, with reproachful surprise, "I didn't think you were capable of such a belief as that! I won't allow anything of the kind. A neighborhood is such an elastic affair when you try to prove such a thing as that."

"What is that? neighborhoods are elastic sort of affairs?" repeated a clear masculine voice behind them; and this time Nathaniel Dow strolled idly out upon the veranda. He, too, had seemed aimless and restless for the last ten minutes. It was too warm a night to discuss business affairs, he said. The widow had seen his wandering attention with quiet penetration. "Surely neighborhoods ought to be elastic if we carry out the Scriptural injunction, oughtn't they?" said he. "By the way, I came out on the train with a lady who complained you'd rather given her the go-by lately, Miss Jakway. She seemed to think neigh-



borliness had been stretched to an extreme point of tension with her."

"Who? Mrs. Fordyce?" enquired Eliza. "I have neglected her lately. I haven't been there since she got back. I didn't really know she was at home until yesterday, when I met the doctor."

Dr. Fordyce was one of the two most active practitioners in the place, and was a near neighbor of the Dows', though his house fronted on a more central street of the village, where its pretty gables were half lost among the thick foliage which was a peculiarity of most parts of Setauket. A light from there could be seen now, glistening among the trees. The doctor's wife was still a young woman, and their vicinage had brought within Eliza's reach a friendship which had been a great resource in her narrow life, and she had helped to wear a path through the intervening fields; constituting herself a bright link, with the free activity of girlhood, between the two households, and not expecting an even interchange. Indeed, Mrs. Dow would have found any frequent visitor an annoyance.

"I wonder how old Mr. Sydney is improving," remarked Miss Dow. "I see Dr. Fordyce has been attending him. I shouldn't be surprised if he didn't get around again. I cling to that old belief, that there's apt to be three deaths in a neighborhood. Eliza thinks I'm very superstitious, but I've seen it so often come true that I can't help thinking there is something in it."

Nathaniel looked from one to another. It was evident that Aunt Margaret had a grievance.

"Don't you believe in omens, Miss Jakway?" asked he. "That's singular for a young lady. I supposed they knew all about such lore. And

certainly you come naturally by it out in Suffolk. It is indigenous to the soil."

"You must regard me as an exception, then," she returned, after a moment's silence. "But I shouldn't like to forfeit my right to a claim to the soil. I, too, am a product, though I don't think it necessary to plant some things in the new and others in the old of the moon and that nobody ever dies until the tide goes out, or any of the other absurdities."

"Look out!" warned Nathaniel. "I come of sailor stock, remember! All that network of tradition is dear to the sailor heart. All regions where there is a considerable sailor population are inclined to superstition," added he. "I do not myself consider it a weakness. It is only a confession that we cannot wholly understand the laws under which we live, or of a more than ordinary awe of the mysteries around us. I am not sure that I am quite exempt from it myself."

"There, I was sure you had too much good sense to take such an extreme stand," said Miss Margaret Dow, much pleased. "You're too much of a Dow to repudiate all belief in the supernatural. They have known so many singular things to happen. None of them ever would or could say there was nothing in them. I don't like superstition, but it won't do to go to the other extreme," rather testily. "It isn't all one way or all the other." The good lady considered her own belief nicely poised. She found it irritating to encounter this progressive, iconoclastic, modern spirit. "There are a great many things that are very curious and you have to allow they are curious."

"Strange coincidences," Eliza said.



“Oh, yes, coincidences. That’s easily said,” with warmth. “You’re not very reverent, Miss,” said she, nodding her head. Aunt Margaret was easily aroused, but as easily mollified.

Nathaniel laughed at this little engagement. It amused him to see how the girl held her own, with clear, untroubled eyes and firm smiling lips. Yet she turned to him a little doubtfully.

“You don’t think of it as Dr. Fordyce does,” she said. “I carried his wife in a horseshoe I picked up in the lane—a new one, too!—and he met me with it and read me quite a lecture on thinking it possible they would indulge in any such folly. He wanted to know if I was a *voodoo*, and said they didn’t have charms about the house. I had considered it such an innocent thing to do! Ever since I’ve been looking at it differently, and I see that it is really very weak and foolish to care for signs like that. It will be some time before I shall recover enough independence to pick a four-leaf clover, or to mind whether my left ear burns, or if I spill salt or tumble upstairs, or do any other of the things that bring dreadful consequences. He says superstition is spirituality unchecked by common-sense and reason. I thought the definition very good,” added she, with a gravity that struck Nathaniel as prettily quaint.

“Fordyce is a man of science, and naturally attacks all the pleasant old beliefs that can’t be mathematically demonstrated,” said he. “And I suppose the efficacy of horseshoes has never been proved. I see you are rather versed for all your pretended indifference. What do you make of that thin crescent looking you full in the face from over that tree, there?”



"Open disgrace," said Eliza, promptly, disregarding her professions in the surprise with which she raised her eyes and greeted the new moon, a slender, pale, delicate sickle, limned against the evening sky opposite.

Nathaniel threw back his head and laughed long and heartily.

"No question about your being a native," he said. "But I never knew that it meant anything so tragical as that. That wasn't my version. Haven't I heard something about a new admirer, Aunt Margaret? I know you remember all the old signs."

"What's that? Full in the face? Why, we girls used to say a new beau for that, I remember. How'd you come to think of it, Nat? The Indians couldn't very well hang any powder horn on there, could they? They can start off on their hunt safely enough. Well, I believe I'll go in. I see it lacks just four minutes of the witching hour o' nine." She arose and drew her shawl about her. Nathaniel hastened to help her, and to hand her her cane. "I believe my drive tired me," said she. "And it's damp tonight after the shower."

"I can't identify some of those lights," remarked Nathaniel, as he returned to his post by the pillar, looking out towards a glimpse of the open sea. "I should like to know where that bright, stationary one is. Let us go out where we can see farther up the coast."

"Be careful not to go where it's damp, Eliza. The grass must be dreadfully wet after that heavy rain. Here take my shawl, if you're going." Regardless of the girl's demurs, she left it with her and went hobbling into the house.

### III

“There is no pleasanter sound to me,” said the young man, as they paced along, “than that of the sea. I would miss it, I know, if I were to live inland. Mountains are the only element of scenery that at all compensates for it; but, grand as they are, I do not feel that kinship for them in the blood that would make them the same to me.”

“‘And with me high mountains are a feeling,’” quoted Eliza. “Not that I ever saw a mountain,” laughing.

“Yes, I suppose the Swiss and the Scotch feel that way, and noble races they are. But I believe I have an affinity for the sea inherited from a sea-faring ancestry that binds me to it more especially. None of my ancestors were mountaineers. We belong by long descent to the lowlands. When I go west on business I always feel refreshed and invigorated to get back where I meet the first sniff of the salt brine.”

“I should not like to live inland,” said the girl, with the quick prejudice of a dweller by the coast. “And yet, sometimes I am a little tired of the monotony here. No wonder we are all of us stupid. Cousin Frank used to tell me I was a bivalve.”

“Did Frank tell you that? It sounds just like him,” said Nathaniel, quickly. It came to him with a flash of intuition that that little touch of sensitiveness he had observed in her was due to



some such experience with his cousin. "I'm not surprised," he added, drily.

"You think Frank a little conceited, I know," laughed she. "And so do I. But it was the truth—or at least, it had a grain of truth in it. We are rather shut in and silent. But it's our situation. Even Cousin Frank, with all his brilliancy, wouldn't exactly 'corruscate with wit,' if he were to be here all the time."

"No, no doubt change of scene is necessary for us all," assented her companion, something of the decided pleasure he experienced in finding that they were launched upon this easy, confidential exchange of views making itself perceptible in his voice as he spoke. "Yet, Miss Jakway, after a day in the city among the toiling and moiling, with men cheating and getting the best of each other, and everyone growing careworn and world-hardened in the pursuit of some selfish end, far from seeming stupid out here you appear to me the fortunate denizens of some sort of Arcadia."

"Ah, Mr. Dow, we all know your opinion of our Arcadia. It will do for us and Jennings—poor thread-bare Mr. Jennings—but for you, as for Cousin Frank, it would be altogether too circumscribed a sphere."

Here it was again: the hint—more than a hint, of a capacity for quick observation and insight that forced him to recognize a depth such as he had not looked for. And yet it was hardly the gentle girl he had hitherto known, whose quiet, undemonstrative ways had seemed to promise a feminine softness exactly to his taste, when he should overcome the barrier of reserve that had so far held him at a distance.



"It is lonely for you here," he said, presently, and Eliza, who had been taking herself to task for her hasty speech was much relieved by his friendly tones. "Do you always pass your evenings as you did tonight? I mean, at that work? Making those things?" A vision of Eliza making spills of bright, variously-colored tissue paper through the long winter nights, or making one at some sacrificial game of cards, came to him as a downright injustice and genuine loss to the world.

Eliza did not understand at first. Those spills were one of her cousin Florence's pet economies; it was a great saving of matches.

"Making spills? Oh, no, I only happened to be doing that," she said, taking his question quite seriously. "Sometimes I practice. The piano is so far away nobody minds. But the lights are not well arranged and Dr. Fordyce says it tries my eyes, so sometimes I only play in the dark, just by ear."

Nathaniel was impressed by this melancholy picture of Eliza playing in the dark to while away the long, lonely evenings.

"You might learn to be a second Clara Schumann," he deliberated.

"Yes, I might." The young person to whom this brilliant possibility was held out spoke in a tone of such keen indignation that the other recognized the humor of it at once and laughed outright, even before she continued. "And you might be as great a linguist as that—that Italian, whoever he was, if you would only utilize all your spare moments."

"That is true," he acknowledged. "Yes, you don't have much incentive to bang away, I sup-

pose. That's the real trouble with a country life. One fancies one would accomplish wonders with all that leisure, but once away from the stimulating example, the friction, and one rusts inevitably—I beg pardon!”

“Oh, I know I do rust. You need not,” said she, hastily. “But then, I don't think I ever was polished up.” Both laughed in happy accord.

It was a beautiful night, fresh and fragrant, and the stars were obscured by some dark clouds. The murmur of the unseen, unfathomable sea was all about them, and its splash and beat could be heard among the rocks on the shore. The occasional dull thud of the distant higher surf of the ocean came borne to their ears by the freshening breeze.

“I think we are getting a little better acquainted, Miss Jakway,” Nathaniel ventured to say, pressing closer the small hand that rested on his arm under pretense of thinking that it was about to slip from its support. “I found you very hard to get acquainted with, at first. I began to think I should never make any progress toward it. It was Sisyphus, wasn't it, who was always condemned to rolling a stone up a hill and having it descend again?”

“Must you have a classical allusion? or will the old song do? ‘Such a getting upstairs I never did see: getting up one stair, tumble down three?’” laughed Eliza. She was sure now that he did not criticize her, or he would not complain of not getting better acquainted.

“How wicked of you! Your tone sounds just as if you had enjoyed it,” he accused her, to her further amusement. “Yes, it seemed as if I never



got ahead. I thought you had taken a great prejudice against me."

"Oh, no, how can you say so? I had heard so many complimentary things said of you, on the contrary. It made me feel afraid of you. I had been led to suppose you were quite a pattern—an Admirable Crichton."

Eliza was venturing into new fields. Tonight she had floated up, as it were, on to the crest of a wave of greater freedom and self-assertion, yet it was with some trepidation that she hazarded the strength of these untried wings.

"Worse and worse," said Nathaniel; but the elated little laugh with which he spoke plainly said that his self-love had not been proof against this naive confession. "You had been led to suppose, and were evidently misinformed, that tone says. And yet I ought to be glad that you used the past tense, Miss Jakway. It seems that I am in a fair way to recover from this very alarming condition."

Was he offended or not? Eliza could not tell, and though she would have liked to obtain a near view of his features she was not to be greatly cast down on this lovely night with her hand held so closely on his arm while they sauntered together along the sandy beach.

"You are very sarcastic, but I have heard it said of you," she defended herself, with a little nod of the head.

"I assure you, you do me a great deal too much honor," said her companion. "I am not experienced socially. I am a busy man, Miss Jakway, and my life in the city is the prosaic life of a struggling member of the legal fraternity, and the doors of society, when they open to me at



all—for, through my mother's relatives and my old college friends I do have invitations sometimes—they open into rather an alien atmosphere, in which I feel myself very slightly at home. Neither my mother nor myself have the means to go out often in New York society. But that was no reason. You are only throwing dust in my eyes. Why were you so reserved, so distant?" he persisted, in the same tone of low, almost tender complaint.

Eliza drew back a little. Memory would not let her forget those tender episodes with Frank Dow when she had first met him some years ago, and how she had felt afterwards when she realized she had been merely the amusement of an idle hour. Down in her heart there was still a fierce unforgivingness to her cousin in that she had not shielded her against that.

"Doesn't it occur to you that there may not be much of me to know, Mr. Dow? I have heard sailors say that shallows may be as baffling to sound as depths," laughed she, with light evasion.

"No, I believe you are deep. I think you are deeper than I thought before," said Nat, and he said it with so much conviction that the girl's merriment rang out into the night like a chime of silver bells.

"Well, I think you are entitled to the name of discoverer to have discovered that I have depths; no one has ever thought so before." Eliza did not intend to be pathetic, but her tone appealed to the young man with a force of unconscious truthfulness.

"That is it," he said, quickly. "You are utterly without egotism, and you have never been in the habit of thinking about yourself. You have

allowed yourself to be absorbed into the current of other lives, and so have acquiesced in the tacit verdict that this dull, commonplace groove was sufficient for you. But you have suppressed your own deeper nature to do this."

"Oh, but I haven't always acquiesced," objected Eliza, with instinctive honesty. "You don't know of my discontent."

"I know of your cheerfulness. Discontent would be only natural for a young person of your age. You are buried here. It's no life for a young girl. I wonder my aunt doesn't see it. And yet—my conscience reproaches me for instructing you in a more selfish philosophy. It seems to be such an easy cloak for all unlovely qualities. I try to resist it, and yet I know that I do not keep clear of it. As for you, you are as little assertive as a healthy minded person need be. Some little assertion is necessary, but no one who knows you would wish you otherwise."

This kind of appreciation and sympathy, spoken in that deep, gentle tone that carried assurance of its genuineness, was new to his companion. She, who had never supposed her own character of interest to anyone, excepting as its weaknesses were brought into prominence—she was often uncomfortably conscious of those—could not but be joyfully receptive to this new music. Its utterances sank deep into her girlish soul.

She turned her head and looked up into the kindly eyes bent upon her. They were not only kindly, they were full now of a glowing light before which hers fell involuntarily.

They walked along, slowly returning to the steps, and started to go in. As Eliza drew her hand from her companion's arm, the bracelet on



it caught in the meshes of her fleecy, white shawl. Nathaniel offered to extricate it, but in the first sharp movement the edges had already bruised the tender flesh.

"Did it hurt you? That is too bad," he exclaimed. "Let us come up under the light where we can see better."

The operation was a rather long one, perhaps because a young man's fingers are awkward at such things; when, at this juncture, Captain Jakway threw open the wide hall door and allowed a stream of brighter light to encircle the two forms and bending heads, as he came out, vigorously starting a light in his pipe, for his evening walk homeward.

"Look out there!" he sang out. "Aren't you two craft pretty close together? What's the need of your exchanging such close signals?"

Eliza looked up, one corner of the white shawl gracefully disposed over her brown head, her eyes looking graciously, caressingly, out from under the loose rings that shaded her forehead. Never should Nathaniel forget the shy, mischievous beauty of that laughing face if he lived to be as grey as the old captain yonder, who was still enjoying his own broad wit. If he had been heart-free before, he was destined to be so no longer.

"It is of no consequence," Eliza said, sweetly. "It will be easy enough to do inside."

Uncle Petrarch's rough jokes did not discompose her. She went up the steps with glowing cheeks and shining eyes, her white shawl slipping off her shoulders, a smile on her lips, and passed by him without any answer. As she paused in the hall to staunch the blood from the little wound in her arm with her handkerchief, she was in-



tercepted by the widow, who came hastily out of the library, where she had been in the act of closing the windows. Mrs. Dow had a startled air, and looked strangely pale and disturbed.

"Eliza, I think I have seen a ghost," said she, with almost a gasp. "Hush! don't tell anyone," with a slight, nervous laugh. "They would think me so foolish! But it was strange! It was his face, I am sure. Oh, do you suppose it could have been my imagination? I am sure it was a real face! That's the strange part of it. Oh, Eliza, what can it be? What can it be? Do you suppose it is an omen? It is just the time of year, the month of awful memories to all of the Dow race. What do you suppose it means? Oh, I know how silly it must seem to you!" Mrs. Dow did not seem like herself, as she stood wringing her hands in her excitement and bewilderment.

"Mean? Why, I don't know, Cousin Florence. What has frightened you so? I am sure you haven't seen any ghost," said the girl, reassuringly. "But why not tell anyone? It is better to let them know, whatever it is. Can't I tell Mr. Dow? Isn't it something he could do?"

The bright smile brought to her lips by the old captain's words had not yet entirely faded; the warm current of her pulses, that had but a moment before throbbed with young, exultant life, could not all at once respond to the widow's dismay, though her joyous mood was checked and chilled by it.

"It was a man's face, Eliza, looking in at the window—I saw it as plainly as I see yours; a man that I thought was drowned at sea years ago. What do you suppose it means that I should

see his ghost? I never cared for him and he persecuted me, and left me under a load of misfortune from which he might easily have freed me. Eliza, I feel as if my own end was approaching."

Mrs. Dow was still pale and tremulous, and was obliged to seat herself on one of the hall chairs. Her young cousin ran through to the sideboard in the dining-room for a glass of water, and came hurrying back, the ice clicking against the sides of the tumbler and her heels pattering on the inlaid wooden floor of the hall as she hastened.

The captain had joined Nathaniel down on the pathway, and the two women were alone. A glance at the girl's face, now becoming wan as her own from contagious excitement, made the widow smile with more composure as Eliza again stood before her.

"Well, never mind, Eliza," she said. "It may have been only fancy. I do not seem like myself this evening. I didn't know I was one of the superstitious ones."

"I don't believe you are," rejoined Eliza, unwilling to so easily give up the matter. "Please let me ask Mr. Dow. It can't do any harm," and, without waiting for permission, she flew to the door. Nathaniel came immediately at her call. "Cousin Florence thought she saw a man looking in at the library window," explained she. "Would you mind going around there to see if you can see anybody?"

Nathaniel's answer was to promptly dart away around the bay window near, and become lost in the thickness of the clouded summer night, though the widow stood behind Eliza laughing and deprecating that it was foolish and unnecessary



to do so. Captain Jakway, after hearing a little more from them both, started the other way. The two women stood waiting on the veranda, hearing the splash of the tide, the distant scream of a gull.

Both men soon returned, but had discovered no cause for alarm. The exchange of a few words between Captain Jakway and the new gardener, who had been found sitting on the stone steps of the basement area, was all there was to report.

"He says the indications are for another storm tonight. I guess he's about right," said the captain.

Eliza had been earnestly casting about in her mind for a solution of this problem. These words of the old captain's furnished her with a clue.

"Don't you believe it was he?" she asked, eagerly, of her cousin. "Was it a man with a heavy beard? and bushy eyebrows? It's just like him to come and peep into the windows. He seemed to me to be queer. I believe there's something odd about that man! I shouldn't wonder if we should find that he had escaped from prison, or something of that kind. I really shouldn't."

"I think we had better discharge him, Eliza, if you feel so much distrust of him," said Mrs. Dow, seeing that the young lady was becoming quite wrought up as she advanced this theory, and that her eyes had grown unnaturally large as she dwelt upon it. Nathaniel, also, laughed and rallied her on this fanciful idea. "He came to us well recommended, you know, and it isn't very easy to supply his place. Well, it's time I went to bed and slept off my notions; good-night, father," and, kissing the old man, as she never failed to do, nightly, when they parted, and apparently quite her usual



matter-of-fact self, she went through to the door of the kitchen to give Sarah her directions in regard to breakfast. Eliza had time for a few words with Nathaniel, a last laughing glance down at him over the banisters, as she and her cousin wended their way upstairs. They had been speculating about the incident that had just occurred; and already it seemed like a figment of the widow's imagination. Mrs. Dow called back to him that she knew he'd make fun of her if she told him. They'd find out his pet weakness some day.

Mrs. Dow's room, with its dressing room off from it, occupied the second story of one wing of the house. It had windows on three sides, and the white curtains were fluttering and the low light flickering in the draught as she entered, followed by Eliza. Here a change again came over her; her fears returned, and the girl would not leave her until she had seen her in a calmer mood.

It was a reversal of their ordinary relations that neither thought much of at the time. Eliza, though not unsympathetic, was too happy not to help to scatter the mists of gloomy imagination by the very brightness of her youthful presence; she still felt and acted as if she had come out of a world of warm actualities that had left her entirely out of rapport with ghosts, and brought it home to Mrs. Dow, without need of words, how little likely it was that she had had any supernatural vision. Yet the more she became convinced that it had been no apparition, the more disposed she was to seek a natural and plausible explanation and conclude that she must have seen the man himself.

“Can it be possible that he is still alive? I had every reason to believe that he was dead. His

own family believe it. That man has been the evil genius of my life," she said, as she sat while Eliza was loosening the strands of her long black hair, still scarcely touched with grey. "No wonder I fear him. Whenever he crossed my path he brought disaster. When I first met him I was a care-free, happy girl, and had plenty of admirers. I didn't want his attentions, but he forced them upon me. There was no pushing him off, and at last I half accepted him. I was frightened into it. You can easily believe that when I met Mr. Dow—came to know him, that is, for I had always seen him around the Point, and thought him the handsomest man I had ever set eyes upon! I couldn't make up my mind to keeping faith with that other. I had been a spoiled, wilful girl, and had never done anything yet that I didn't want to. I threw myself upon his generosity, and asked him to release me. I had never liked him, I told him plainly. He let me go—he couldn't very well do otherwise—but he never forgave me, and he always tried to do me all the injury he could. It seemed to smoulder in that gloomy nature of his, ready to break forth in some ugly purpose towards me. But if it had only been me, and he had not sacrificed poor Tom—" for a moment she broke down, and hid her face in her hands, and Eliza saw her grieve as she had never seen her grieve before. But she soon controlled herself. "Yet it is not too late for him to make up for it, if he would. If he only would! Eliza, what if it were no ghost, but Jarvis Marshall himself, come to do me tardy justice at last! If it were true and he would be willing to testify to all that he knows, it seems to me I could die content."

"Don't talk of dying, Cousin Flo," Eliza cried. "I don't see why you shouldn't live a thousand



years," and she threw her arms about the elder woman's neck in the exuberance of her own happiness and sympathy. Mrs. Dow shook her off with the uneasiness of one unused to demonstration; but not before a tear had fallen on her black hair, and she saw the girl's eyes were full of them as she raised her head.

"Well, I'm sure I'm glad if there'd be one to mourn for me," said she, smiling. "I may live longer than you want me to, now, however. I don't know that anything's the matter with me, though I sometimes fancy I'm not quite as well as I used to be. Well, dear, how did the evening go? Were you and Nathaniel walking on the beach? Margaret said you were. You two are becoming very good friends, are you not?"

Mrs. Dow had a pet scheme of her own. In her opinion, Eliza, who was of her own kith and kin, was a very unusual girl. The widow was both proud and fond of this protégé of hers. She took pleasure in seeing that Eliza had all that was necessary in the way of dress; having always been fond of dress herself, and being ignorant of the best society, she rather overestimated its importance. It was not due to her that Eliza possessed as much culture and refinement as she had, or made so creditable an appearance. But she enjoyed the triumph, as if it were a thing in which she had a part, of Nathaniel's evident admiration and liking.

"Why don't you go in for him, Eliza?" said she. "You couldn't meet a nicer fellow. Remember, I should approve."

"Oh, Cousin Florence, please don't! If there's anything I hate it is to be told to 'go in' for anybody," said Eliza, nervously.



"Yes, that's the way girls talk," said the widow; but the smile with which she spoke rather softened the coarse practicality of her words. She herself had once been an untutored girl, but Eliza's modest diffidence and reserve were very unlike her own self-confident attitude toward the world. "But it ought not to be any sacrifice of pride for you to make yourself a little attractive," objected she. "I don't see the need for any girl to shroud herself up in a sort of repellant pride."

"Have I shrouded myself up in a repellent pride?" asked Eliza, smiling and looking so sweet and pretty that her cousin's vexation was partially disarmed.

"Well, I don't know as you have with Nat, so much. There's something about his bright ways that makes it a difficult thing to keep him at a distance, for you or anyone else. But I've seen you with others." The widow, perhaps, had some recollection that Eliza and her own son had not been on the best of terms. "Well, as I say, nothing would please me so much. You seem to me well suited to each other, and if you marry I will give the house to you both. It's rightfully Nat's, anyway, only he'd never accept it from me otherwise. He's the only Dow among us."

"Well, don't count me as part of such a mercenary arrangement," said Eliza, shrinking back. "I won't even talk of it. I didn't intend to even listen to you, Cousin Flo." Eliza was in a tremor. It almost seemed as if she were defending some right.

"But why impossible?" persisted Mrs. Dow. "As if you didn't know what Nathaniel comes down here for!"

"Why, he comes on your business," said Eliza.

"Yes, he does, and he doesn't," laughed the widow. "If you think it is all business you are the only one in the house in the dark."

"Oh, I don't believe it," declared Eliza. "I know it isn't so," and she was glad to run away from further talk to her own room.

"Little goose," was the widow's only comment, and after the girl was gone she sat for several hours watching the gathering of another heavy storm with which the over-charged atmosphere relieved itself later in the night.

Once in her own room Eliza looked at the image of herself in the mirror with a closer, more critical scrutiny than ever before. That image was strikingly pretty tonight with all that radiance of hope, sweetness and graciousness about it. Eliza had never before valued her beauty much, though she could not be unaware of it; but, in her retired life it had counted for little more as a factor than the beauty of flowers outside. But she could hardly accept Nathaniel's words of praise as she thought them over. Ah, he little knew what a restless, discontented being she was—had been, this very night. But she would never be so again. And he—how little she had done him justice! He was kindness and manliness itself. All his opinions seemed so sound and just. She was coming to feel a reliance upon him, a trust in him, such as she had felt in no other person. And yet, only so short a time before, she had felt almost antagonistic toward him!

But she had a great horror of her cousin's intermeddling. Already something of the glamour was gone from her remembrance of the evening's good understanding on account of what she had said.

## IV

The storm which soon broke over their heads was a violent one, and left none of them an excuse for sleeping. Eliza rose and sat by the window, watching the vivid play of the lightning and the fall of the rain in heavy sheets, and in some anxiety as to the effect upon her flower beds. Early morning found her out in her garden looking into the extent of the damage, and finding the shrubbery much beaten and sad havoc among the geranium border. But the grass was like velvet, and the trees, though somewhat denuded of their foliage, showed a new freshness of leaf and stem.

She herself seemed to partake something of this morning dewiness as she entered the breakfast room with her hands full of convolvulus, to be greeted by exclamations at their delicately tinted, evanescent beauty from the rest already gathered there.

“You are out early,” Nathaniel said, looking up with a smile as she entered. He was cutting up some canteloupes which had been placed on the table before him.

“Eliza is always an early bird,” remarked Mrs. Dow.

“I was out looking at my pansy bed,” said the girl. “I was afraid the rain had washed away the stakes. I had them planted several days ago, for I intend to have some early ones next year.”

“Are they up yet?” Nathaniel asked.



“Up? Do you think they are Jonah’s gourd, sir?” as she ordered Myra to bring in a bowl of water and proceeded to arrange her flowers. There are few things that fall in the way of feminine occupation that display one to greater advantage than this act of arranging flowers. Nathaniel seemed to think so, and watched her while she did this, enjoying the evidence of his power furnished him in the down-cast, averted eyes, which displayed so well the length of the eyelashes on the round, pale, satin-smooth cheeks; yet that did not prevent his seeing that there were darker shadows beneath. Indeed, she confessed to a night of interrupted rest, and all in common said that they had been much disturbed by the storm.

“How about your scare, Aunt Florence? What did it resolve itself into?” Nat asked.

“I have no idea,” Mrs. Dow said, as she turned the coffee.

“Emerson never said a truer thing than that Nature makes fifty poor melons for one that is good,” her nephew went on to observe, as he helped out the melons. “Now this looks to me like the fifty-first melon. You people don’t consider how fortunate you are in having your own fruit fresh from the vines. I’ve given up eating melons in the city. It seems to me they are all stale.”

“And of all stale things an old melon is the stalest,” remarked Aunt Margaret. “But I don’t think we have quite as good success with melons as father used to have. Or is it in me that nothing seems as good as it once was?”

“You a pessimist, Aunt Meg, and joining in the general cry of degeneracy?” Nathaniel said, with

a smile. His eyes met Eliza's. How different was their view of life from that of this lonely, misanthropic old woman. The best of it to them did not lie in the past.

"How can you look at these morning-glories and talk of stale things!" protested Eliza. "They seem to rebuke the very thought. They speak of dawn and morning and everything fresh and lovely. If you had taken an early morning walk as I did, Miss Dow, you would have brought more zest to your melons." Brightened by that exchange of glances, Eliza trailed the last long tendril up to meet the shell full of growing plants that hung from the chandelier as she spoke, and seated herself in triumph.

Miss Dow put her gold eye-glasses on her nose, and took up the morning paper.

"Upon my word, quite a sermon from you young people," grumbled she. "It's to be hoped I may profit by it. I never knew you to be so pharisaical, Eliza. Well, anyone may get up early if they like; I never was addicted to it." Indeed, the storm that had so shortened her slumbers had this morning brought her down at a much earlier hour than usual.

"Nat, I have one or two commissions I would like you to attend to in the city, if you can spare the time," said the widow, as the young man, having exhausted all available pretexts for lingering, and finding his watch left him little more than time to catch the latest morning express, rose to go.

"This will be a great accommodation, Nat. Don't try to bring everything; you can have part of them sent by express," she explained, apologetically, as she turned around. "But I need



them, and can't wait to go in myself. You think so poorly of Setauket already, perhaps it isn't best to tell you what shopping facilities we have out here," referring laughingly to the others.

"No," Eliza chimed in, "old Mr. Tennick once wondered at my wanting to buy a whole paper of pins. He generally obligingly sold them in rows. But then, to do Setauket justice, Mr. Tennick is not our largest dealer."

"If that's the state of the case I assume you must have a few wants to add to this list," Nathaniel said. But she declined his offer with that little touch of primness he had hoped she was forgetting.

"I am afraid I shouldn't think of burdening you further, Mr. Dow."

"Oh, no burden," said he, quickly. "You must be content then to be regarded as an anomaly among suburban ladies," meeting her glance with a smile, the kindling smile that seemed so much a part of him, and that brought the warm color to her own face as he left the room. There was the memory of the night before in both pairs of eyes in that mutual glance.

The morning, already advanced, wore away rapidly. Eliza was restless but joyous. She was heard singing as she moved about the house, as she went down the garden walks. The youthful, joyous side of her character seemed awakening, now that the sunshine had entered her life, and she felt the penetrating radiance of its beams; as the impulse of song stirs in the heart of a caged bird that from the quiet and dullness of his surroundings has lost the faculty for a time, but recovers it again when he is translated to a brighter and more cheerful spot. There was but



one cloud upon her horizon, and that was the widow's expressed wish that she should call upon her daughter-in-law at Ex-Secretary Casgrove's. Yet it was with comparative indifference to what she would probably have regarded as an ordeal a week ago, that she set out that afternoon to accomplish this call; such is the power of any deep emotion to make the outward events of life seem of comparatively slight importance.

It was not a long walk up to Mr. Casgrove's, but Eliza had consumed some time over her toilette, and it was late when she turned into the gate. It was a fine, August day, and the sun was low in the west, and lay warmly along the smooth lawn, which had now become a dry floor of close-shorn sod, dappled by spots of elongated shade from several large trees. The most perfect neatness prevailed, though the curling brown leaves, eluding the vigilance of the careful gardener, had succeeded in matting themselves in among the black stems of the low shrubs, and might occasionally be found on the drive, bowling liesurely over at the capricious suggestion of a chance breeze, or seeking a sheltered haven where the gravel shelved smoothly off into the sombre turf. The house, as you came in view of it, had quite an imposing look, though originally plain enough. Tall urns filled with plants upon a terrace of grey stone, a row of stately palms, the glass of a conservatory beyond, banks of brilliant annuals—these embellishments from the hand of fortune had quite transformed the everyday brick dwelling in their midst.

It was not exactly an easy duty that had been imposed upon Eliza. Everybody knew of the stand Mrs. Dow had taken; of the strong preju-

dice she would not attempt to overcome. It was Eliza's task to go between these two, without being disloyal to her cousin, and yet to avoid showing antagonism to Milly. She had never been called upon for diplomatic service before.

She was told that Mrs. Dow would see her, and was ushered into a long room opening upon the terrace. The well-trained colored man who showed her in, the elegance in which she found herself—each had its effect in somewhat lessening the courage with which she had entered; and, as her eyes noted amidst the handsome ensemble of the room numerous evidences of Mr. Casgrove's public career and foreign travel in the many curious and rare articles to be seen, she was unpleasantly reminded of Mrs. Frank Dow's august host. When a chance footstep came near that seemed heavy enough for a masculine tread, she experienced some real trepidation at the idea of a possible encounter with him.

The minute hand of the little bronze clock on the mantel had passed over some space before the rustle of skirts and a slight footfall announced an approach. Frank's young wife came forward with outstretched hand to welcome her caller with a cordiality that changed Eliza's lurking dread into a feeling of greater confidence. She was a slight creature, whose chief peculiarity, as you first met her, was the studied grace of her movements, and the bright varied expression of her delicate features. There was the charm about her that Eliza had been led to expect in one who had had the advantages that had been Millie Hayden's; and Eliza's imagination was open to those differences in Millie's dress and manner that marked what is known as the "society girl."



Eliza, in her own honest and hearty country bloom, could not conscientiously carry her recognition of Millie's attractions any farther than this; for the face, a peculiar one in itself, presented contradictions which slightly and vaguely repelled, and aroused criticism. It was red and white, and yet sad, with lightly wrinkled brows; a rose-leaf not in its first freshness, but beginning to curl a little at the edges. She seemed nervous, high-strung, wilful, with only an outward repose; yet Eliza did not wonder she should exert a strong influence over a man of the disposition of Frank Dow, and should almost unfailingly attain her own ends.

"And how is mamma? Is she well?" said Mrs. Dow, and Eliza had a humorous feeling springing out of a remembrance of the talk of the evening before that these enquiries were made somewhat as we ask about the habits of some curious creature, some formidable but securely absent wild animal.

"How can you live in that lonely old house?" pursued she, when the girl had replied. "I can't understand what Frank sees in it. Old association, I suppose. That makes such a difference. We walked down past there the other evening—I mean, the last time I was down—and it gave me the blues to look in under all those dark trees. And that dreadful, old graveyard opposite—doesn't it make you feel gloomy and unhappy? If I lived there the only way it would be endurable to me would be to entertain—bring parties of young friends down to stay in the house with me, and give lawn parties and teas. Mrs. Dow herself would be more cheerful, and it would be better for



you I should think, Miss Jakway. You wouldn't have to lead that sort of recluse life."

"My life is well enough," said Eliza, not willing that this patronizing little lady should know of her discontent.

Millie stared a little.

"I suppose there's no use talking of any change," she said, "although I agree with Frank that it's rather hard that Thomas Dow's wishes should count for nothing when he told him over and over again that he wished him to be his heir. I say, as I have always said, it's very singular; and although it may not have anything to do with it, in my opinion it's certainly very injudicious in her, to give so much coloring to the theory that remorse is the motive for her actions. For you don't know what is said, Miss Jakway," seeing that Eliza was uneasy and unwilling to talk over her kinswoman and benefactress. "Papa says so, Mr. Casgrove says so, everybody says so! Of course we know there must be some other motive, but the outside world doesn't. But, talking about it does no good. We may propose, but she will dispose; and there will be an end of it. And Mr. Nathaniel Dow, where is he? Frank thinks so much of his cousin. He's been a hero of his ever since they were boys together. Do tell me about him," said she, with a pressing little gesture of guileless interest.

"Mr. Dow spent last evening with us but went back to the city this morning," Eliza answered, not able to command a sudden access of color in her face at the mention of that name and the pleasure these warm words of praise excited. Neither the sudden blush, or the slight indefinable difference in her voice and expression failed to attract

her companion's notice. She slipped on and off her rings, among them a very beautiful diamond, with an abstracted air.

"It seems strange not to know him," she said, in a more qualifying way, "because Frank has always been so fond of his cousin. But, more than that, I've heard a great deal about him from a friend of mine. We are old school friends, and correspond constantly, and she often mentions his name in her letters. They are very warm friends, as I happen to know. She has never told me in so many words that they are engaged, but I know it has been spoken of in the Sunday paper, and I have once charged her with it. She didn't deny it. She is one of the nicest girls I know—none too nice for Nathaniel, perhaps."

"No, I should think not," said Eliza, loyally.

"That may be, but she's very brilliant. It isn't every man that's her equal. She's a splendid correspondent—writes the most original, brightest letters you ever read! She's famous for them! She could make her fortune in literature, all her friends have always told her, but society would lose a lot. I've the greatest curiosity, though, to know if their engagement is really a settled thing."

"I have no means of information," said Eliza, displaying admirable self-possession under this attack, though Millie's keen preceptions had noted the swift change of feature with which she had first heard the intelligence.

"Oh, then it hasn't been formally announced? Of course, he would not say anything about it. But I'm crazy to know about it, just the same." Millie was a bit puzzled by the quiet way in which the news had been received. The pique she felt at



this disappointment, inclined her to be less cautious. "Look out for him, Eliza," said she, playfully, "he's very nice, I don't doubt, but if I am not mistaken he's already appropriated."

"What is that to me?" said Eliza, speaking now with quivering dignity.

"Oh, nothing, perhaps," the other answered, trying to laugh off her embarrassment with the pretty assurance that blinded many people to her faults and failings. "But then, I don't believe in people's going around under false colors. I like to unmask these gay Lotharios. Most young men, even if they have an interest elsewhere, like to have what fun they can with girls they are thrown in with."

"I don't see why they need go around labelled with a ticket. We have no especial designs upon them," Eliza said, rising to her feet and speaking with vivacity. Wounded creatures sometimes show wonderful courage when brought to bay. Who would suppose this quiet girl to have so much spirit? "But I shall be sure and congratulate Mr. Dow the very first thing when I see him tonight." The very pang with which she had heard the announcement had given her strength to meet it. She faced Millie with cool, level glances, under which the latter grew much less suave and sure of her ground.

"Oh, don't do that, please," she deprecated, the rose-leaf color in her cheeks deepening perceptibly; "or, at least, don't use me as an authority, for you might get me into trouble. It's not important enough for that. On second thoughts, I don't believe you'd better speak of it. I doubt if things are enough settled between them. I suppose my friend would feel annoyed if it should



come to her ears that I had circulated a report like that. But if it isn't exactly announced, I regard it as a foregone conclusion." Millie stooped to pat a dainty fox terrier that had just uncurled himself from a satin chair near to fawn around his mistress' feet; and rising herself, she was glad to change the subject now that Eliza had risen.

"I'd like to come down and see you all, but I think Frank would not wish me to go without him. He would have been down to see mamma the last time he was here, only he was here for such a short time; and then, he wasn't quite ready. Frank has a plan—no, I don't know as I ought to tell you, as it isn't fully ripened; but I think you can safely say to her that he'll be down soon, and that he hopes to pay some of his indebtedness to her this fall. He wrote me a very jubilant letter in regard to it the other day. You can't imagine how that has weighed upon him! Perhaps it may make her less embittered against him. She ought not to blame him for speculating. Nobody blames a man for speculating if he's successful." Millie made a vivacious little moue as she said this, but in spite of it Eliza felt dimly that the sentiment was significant of the atmosphere in which the speaker had been educated. It occurred to her, too, that the fact of a man's using another man's money in his speculations might reasonably be considered to alter the question.

Millie changed the subject for a time to draw the other's attention to the best of the works of art hanging on the walls or placed about the big room, and ended by giving her a lovely bunch of hot-house roses, well knowing the girl's passion for flowers. But as they turned their steps toward the open door she returned to the subject

that apparently absorbed the most of her thoughts.

"I believe Frank has the elements of success in him," she resumed. "Papa says he has, and if they can only get this copper mine in working order they all anticipate a golden harvest. Well, remember, Eliza, if any little gathering takes place over here I'll write you a note, and you and Mr. Dow must come over."

But here Eliza, with a hasty movement withdrew her hand and turned away. She was not blind to the fact that Millie's manner had undergone a change during her call—that she had been treated in a confidential way, indeed; but she was not exactly submissive to the patronage.

"Very likely I shall find no chance, for we're very quiet," added Mrs. Dow. "Mr. Casgrove cares to do nothing but play whist all the day long. I'm quite a martyr to the cause. See here," said she, laying a small white hand on one of the four gilt chairs that were ranged closely around a little buhl table in the center of the room, and waving the other over the rest, "this is the altar he sacrifices us all upon! But you and Mr. Dow must come over and play with us one night before I go, if nothing else. I shall send for you and you must come." Eliza, however, did not promise.

The sun was quite low in the west now, and the day at this point was more perfect than before. But to Eliza it was not the same. Yet the awakening was wholesome. Awakenings always are; must be, in the nature of things. How foolish she had been to trust to a phantom delight that had already turned to dust and ashes, like so much Dead Sea fruit. As she went along she excitedly congratulated herself on having had this made plain to her. "How fortunate it was I came," she



said. "I am so glad, at least, to be under no misapprehension. Yes, I am glad I came, and whatever Millie's motive, she really did me a service. Noxious things have their purpose, like some weeds in the garden. Not that she is a weed, but she is a little noxious. It was impossible not to see how anxious she was to let me know that Nathaniel had an interest elsewhere, lest I should be laying some unction to my vanity from my little acquaintance with him. Well, women are all the same. They all have some little malice in their composition."

Eliza was buried deeply in her own thoughts just as one of the many carriages rolling along the beach road suddenly came to a stop near her, and she heard her name called. It was Mrs. Dow, returning from a meeting of the Managers of the Orphan Asylum, jogging along in a one-horse rockaway, drawn by a stout cob, his well-groomed sorrel coat shining in the sunshine. Mrs. Dow divined a change in the girl at once as she got in beside her.

"How did things go, Eliza? Did anything happen?" she asked, curiously. "Nobody ate you up, it seems."

"No," rejoined Eliza, quite literally, too spiritless even to smile, "Mr. Casgrove wasn't around. But I saw Millie, and she was very decent."

"And what does she say of Frank?"

"She says Frank is doing well; that he has acted with prudence and can see his way to success."

"That's easily said. Of course, she has faith in him. What more does she know about it than a baby? But I see that she has quite talked you over." The carriage rolled along for a time.



This latter part of the day was its crowning point of beauty, and their attention was involuntarily arrested by the exquisite picture before them; the softly shaded pink and amber sky, and the round flame-colored ball not far above the horizon, casting a crimson trail upon the sea. Nothing more gloriously, softly golden could be imagined than that big disc as it dipped toward the edge of the restless, chameleon-hued waters. Each remained silent for a while, buried in her own thoughts. Then Mrs. Dow glanced at her young cousin. "Yet, nevertheless, something about it seems to have depressed you. What is the matter?" she said.

"Oh, no," stammered the poor child, with a start, seeing the need of arousing herself to more active effort to hide the wound from which she was inwardly bleeding. "Certainly she didn't talk me over," with almost anger. "She didn't influence me at all. I'm not a weather-vane! I told her, of course, that you had your own reasons, and in any case you had a right to do what you liked with your own. But we didn't discuss the question. I wouldn't discuss it." Eliza, in the consciousness of her own loyalty, fell back on a sort of passionless indignation, ignoring that yearning to hear herself confirmed in her own feeling of having acted aright that besets the strongest and most self-reliant. "She struck me as quite well-informed in regard to business matters, and made me feel that Cousin Frank had perhaps not acted as foolishly as we thought. Of course, I don't mean to judge either way. She said he would be able in a short time to pay off his debt to you."

"Yes, there's nothing succeeds like success. I see she's been making a convert of you," said the

widow, dryly, indulging a quick instinct of unreasoning jealousy and fear that the two younger women should throw their influence together and turn against herself. Self-reliant as she was by nature, she longed for affection in her lonely life with so few near ties, and had deeply felt the alienation from her loved son. She had been true—inflexibly true, to her own sense of right, though her conduct, in this case, must have seemed to most people to be widely opposed to the promptings of a mother's heart. Eliza's tacit assent and approval, as that of the one with the best comprehension of the network of circumstances that had constrained her to do as she had done, had been a comforting staff, whose support she had not thought of until now that there was danger of its being withdrawn.

To lose this solace would have been the last drop of bitterness in her cup. "Nothing justifies wrong measures," continued she, severely, "though I suppose everyone will say so. But I'm glad if luck is on Frank's side. He was always lucky. It's just like him to fall on his feet." She turned to the girl at her side. "Eliza, you know, you ought to know, why I have done this. I tried to keep Frank's expenses within the limits of what I had myself. He was always extravagant, you know, all through his college days, and he drew heavily upon my resources, but yet I managed to do it. You know I always had a little of my own, and I couldn't bear to think of my boy profiting by the Dow property."

It was strange to see the proud woman, with that deprecating look on her face, condescending to this plea of extenuation. But Eliza, in that numbness of sympathy that comes with an ab-



sorbing interest of one's own, was not very reassuring. She thought of it afterward with a pang of regret.

"I know you did as you thought best," with the chill of fatigue in her air and voice. "So I told Millie. It naturally seems strange to outside people that money matters can come between mother and son. I think there is danger of being too practical; of letting these considerations gain an undue importance in our lives."

The elder woman turned and looked at the younger with a sort of pain in her eyes. Eliza did not see the appeal. She was in the deep waters of trouble herself, and could not help protesting mutely against an encounter with any outside perplexities. So much depends upon our own varying moods. Joy and happiness fill full the fountains of our sympathies, which overflow toward those about us; but it is not until disappointment and grief have taught their lesson and disciplined us slowly to bear the excision of all our most cherished hopes and wishes that we can feel patiently and sincerely with the trials of those about us. Young life is, as a general thing, too eager and intense to be depended upon for much sympathetic insight. It was precisely because Eliza had lived so little in herself that her cousin had found her companionship so sufficient. Now that her own life was beginning to shape itself in an independent current it was not to be expected but that she would resist this absorption of herself in the lives and destinies of those about her. The same rebellious feeling that had beset her the evening before, even before Nathaniel spoke, returned to her; and with it an impatience of whatever was enigmatical in her cousin's conduct. "For it is



one of the chief earthly incommunities of some species of misfortune," says Hawthorne, in the *Marble Faun*, "or of a great crime, that it makes the actor in the one, or the sufferer in the other an alien in the world, by interposing a wholly unsympathetic medium betwixt himself and those whom he yearns to meet." Eliza, much as she loved her cousin, was held off by this "chill remoteness of position."

## V

Nathaniel hurried through the active duties of the day with an undercurrent of remembrance of the evening before. It somehow made him feel younger—he was in reality thirty-two, and his acquaintance with ladies had lately been of a distributive rather than concentrated kind, and not at all exciting—now that his existence was taking on brighter colors, that, in fact, he seemed to have an interest in life.

“Are you going down into the country tonight? Come down with me to Coney Island instead,” an old friend accosted him, meeting him as he was hastening to catch the ferryboat, his hands and arms laden with Mrs. Dow’s commissions, the variously-shaped parcels indicating that he had not availed himself largely of her permission to have things sent by express. The friend, a man with whom he had once been upon terms of intimacy, but whom he had lately lost sight of, was overjoyed at the encounter, and became quite urgent, looking much disappointed when he found himself refused. “You’re growing quite a stranger. I’ve lots to tell you,” he said. “Why won’t you come and have a talk over old times? What do you do down at—?—Where is it?—Se-tauket? Any fishing there? I didn’t know it was popular.”

“Yes, it’s getting rather too popular,” Nathaniel said. “It’s a great fishing place, you know. They’re catching bluefish now, off Montauk. I heard of one weighing over eleven pounds

the other day. I presume if anyone cared for the sport they'd find plenty of it. But I'm not down there pleasuring exactly. The old Dow place is there—my grandfather's place, you know—and the widow depends upon me for her man of business. That draws me down there pretty frequently. Oh, it's a dead-and-alive little spot, as far as that goes."

His friend looked quizzically at him.

"I've heard of the old Dow place, and I've always had a curiosity to see it," he said. "I've a good mind to run down there sometime if they have as good bluefishing as you say. But isn't there something else draws you, I say old fellow? What's the interest? Come, confess! Now I come to look at you, you have almost the look of a family man." But Dow only laughed, and started on, waving his hand and just catching the boat by stepping upon it as it receded from the pier, and left a rapidly widening line of water to be seen below.

The pleasant excitement of the evening with its possible developments seemed so secure of promise that it was welcome rather than otherwise to have a time of reflection while the train sped smoothly along through the country, nearing the ocean at one time and again rapidly passing through fields and woods and neat inland villages, so that the transit appeared brief, and the little station at Setauket was reached without his having noticed the lapse of time. It was dusk when he made one of the few striding figures that struck across through deeply shaded, grassy byways, to the row of waiting homes near the beach. Lights were twinkling out of the windows of the house, and the sound of music and of young voices gave



it an unwonted air of revelry as he approached it.

He bounded up on the steps, feeling the gay strains infect his own blood. The revelry resolved itself into very simple elements; Eliza at the piano, the children jumping and hopping about to the music. What she was playing seemed to Eliza almost silly, now that she had another hearer, though she went on with great energy, but with more and more nervousness, as her lively imagination painted how childish and primitive this performance must seem to the alien city vision looking on.

Two of the younger Jakways, with one of their mates, had been at the house all the afternoon; and when Mrs. Dow and Eliza, on their return, had found them, Eliza had set herself to amuse them. These occasional visits were great privileges to her brothers and sisters, and their coming this afternoon had obliged the girl to struggle against the depression that threatened her. She had not been outwardly any different from her usual self during dinner time; only it had been physically impossible for her to eat more than a few mouthfuls; but, as there were the children for her to look after no one noticed this excepting her little sister, who instinctively detected that Lizzie was not in good spirits, and came and threw her arms around her neck, full of fond solicitude. They were not very prosperous looking children, and their home life was rather a pinched one. The older ones regarded their sister, who had been translated to a region of silk dresses and piano practice, as a very enviable being, little thinking how near she sometimes came to envying those of them who had not emerged from the chrysalis stage.

Nathaniel saw with surprise that she scarcely glanced up, and when she did exchange a slight nod with him it was with an agitation that made her seem cold and distant, though she met his eyes, glowing with light, as he perceived the pretty, lively group. Unconsciously to himself, pictures formed in his mind of a bright, possible future, when the old house which he loved would show again a gay, hospitable side to the world.

His aunt rose from her large chair by the open window, and came to relieve him of his parcels, laughingly commending the judgment he had shown in executing her commissions.

"You'd make a model family man," said she.

"So my friend Hosmer told me when he saw me," Dow said, catching up the youngest of the Jakway children, a chubby boy of five years, and giving him a dance to the music on his shoulder, to Jemmy's exuberant delight. The widow led the way to the dining-room, where the young man's dinner had been kept waiting for him.

"But first, you must tell me how the froggie goes," insisted Master Jemmy, in his most importunate style, before he would be set down. Nathaniel, having in an incautious moment, given him a taste of his dramatic capabilities in this line, was obliged to repeat the success whenever he saw him, and in deep, guttural bass, calculated to impress the guilty conscience of the man who listened, gave the croak of the big frog that said, "Nathaniel Dyer, Nathaniel Dyer, He shall be hung, He shall be hung," and then showed how the little frog chimed in in a high piping voice, to the total demoralization of the accomplice, "Ellicott, too, Ellicott, too."



The children in some way identified him with Nathaniel Dyer, and supposed it was his own name he was croaking out. This made it seem exquisitely funny, and even Eliza could not help smiling at the youngsters' infectious chorus of mirth.

"Do it again! Oh, do it again!" Jemmy petitioned, like a young potentate from Nathaniel's shoulder.

"Mercy! What an interesting sight you are, Jemmy," cried Eliza, with natural sisterly nervousness, as she observed that his face and hands were stained with the juice of the blueberry pie he had eaten for dinner. "That is the result of my coming away and leaving you. I thought Myra was to look after you." Jemmy was certainly a graceless looking object, and as belonging distinctively to herself was felt to be an embarrassment. "I'm glad the blueberry season has come to an end. The children enjoy it in such an unequivocal fashion, and it makes such sights of them, with their fingers and bibs all stained. I don't know whether it's that or the thought that the summer is so near at an end that always makes me hate to have blueberries come in season. I always see them go out with more satisfaction."

"You bear scars received in the good cause, don't you, Jem?" Nathaniel said, as he lightly dropped him to the ground.

"Oh, let them enjoy," pleaded Aunt Margaret. "Eliza, you keep at that boy altogether too much. It's no way to check children all the time. The pies were very nice. I'm sorry to see the last of them. I ought not to eat pastry, but I took a little nux after it, and I don't know as it'll hurt me." Taking little homeopathic pellets and pow-



ders was, as Nathaniel declared, Aunt Margaret's one dissipation.

Eliza seated herself on the steps. She could look into the dining-room and see Nathaniel's light head as he sat eating his late meal, under the portrait of his grandfather, the old Nathaniel. Nathaniel's father, who had been the soldier son, had been regarded as the flower of the flock. He had married a young girl of fine family, and afterwards been killed in the war. The old man's lantern-jawed face, with its sharp steely eyes, was just above his grandson's, and even while a faint resemblance came out, the unlikeness was striking.

Old Nathaniel Dow had been looked up to as a sort of patriarchal head by the rather numerous colony of Dows settled in the vicinity. To be sure, it had been a matter of opinion as to whether Grandfather Dow's money had been made in the most gentlemanly and altogether legitimate way; and it had been observed that as the Dow property swelled in bulk and importance there had been a corresponding decrease in the bank account of some of his neighbors—men with whom one would otherwise have supposed him to be on the friendliest of terms. He had been staid, as if no erratic Dow blood ever ran in his veins, was a regular attendant at church, where none were prompter or more sonorous in responses, gave to the poor in a way that left his pastor little to complain of, and in all respects conducted himself as an exemplary member of society should do. His virtues—and more—were upon his tombstone. Eliza had read them there often. She knew that the old man had left a goodly fortune behind him, and Dow house in its present stately form, with a proviso

that it was always to be regarded as the family homestead. A flight of imagination took her back to those early years after the war when a widow and an only child, a fair-haired little fellow in kilts, in obedience to this clause had come to form part of the household. She had been told that the chance guest who sojourned there for a night could not have failed to be impressed by the generous hospitality of those days. Tom Dow had been in his element in playing the host, though not always discriminating in the object of it, and never, as she could well believe, had the old mansion had a more spirited mistress in its palmiest days than her lovely cousin had proved herself in those early years. Mrs. Dow's crisp voice at her side startled her out of her dreaming.

"Are you all taking it easy out here? You have no idea how warm it is inside," she said.

"I ought not to be so lazy," Eliza bethought herself, hastily starting up. "I had ever so many things to do."

She had heard Nathaniel's firm step as he came nearer. He joined the group.

"Things to do at this hour? What can you find to do at this time of day? This is the hour for relaxation," he said, rather reproachfully.

"Do the duty nearest, as Carlyle advises," she answered. Eliza had lately been reading "*Sartor Resartus*." "Come, Jemmy, let me take you upstairs and wash your hands. I'll leave it to anybody if Jemmy isn't a duty just now." There was a forced cadence in her laughter that struck the young man's ear.

"Is that entirely a safe guide for one's actions?" he interposed, in rather a low voice, as she still waited upon the reluctant movements of



the child. "You know it's agreed now that that advice of Carlyle's has had more than its due weight. There are far-off duties, too, that are important. For instance, it is important to enjoy a night like this, especially when you consider it is the last of August and we may not have many such." Nathaniel smiled persuasively, to give more significance to his words. "Won't you come out again for a stroll on the beach later?" he asked.

Quite unconsciously, as it appeared, Mrs. Dow threw her influence into the same side of the scale.

"I agree with you, Nat; I don't altogether like your Carlyle. I notice Eliza makes an oracle of him lately," she said. "He doesn't seem to see that everybody is human. He needs more of the milk of human kindness."

"Yes, I think you're rather true about that, Aunt Florence," Nat agreed. "He does want everybody to be Olympian. He hasn't much patience with ordinary, commonplace people."

"Well, I have," proclaimed this far from commonplace, rather Olympic woman, with her usual decision. "I don't believe in always straining up to such a height. It makes Eliza morbid to study him so much."

"I don't study him," Eliza rebelled, almost fractiously. Even Mrs. Dow sometimes made her feel that she could hardly breathe. In her annoyance she took forcible possession of Jemmy in a way calculated to provoke a conflict.

"But she promised to tell me a story," said Jemmy, beginning to cry. He had played hard and was in a demoralized condition, ensuing upon the drop to dullness from intensely exciting play. The Fordyce children had just gone and Jemmy



was awakening to bare reality. "She can't go lest she breaks her promise," he whined.

"Is your sister under your authority, my small man?" Dow was impatient that such a small rival should interfere with his plans for the evening. "Aren't you rather youthful to display so marked a tendency to monopoly?"

"I did promise him, Mr. Dow. Jemmy, it is not necessary for you to cry so. I have no intention of breaking my word. 'A promise made should be a promise kept,' you know, especially to children," smiling a fleeting, apologetic smile to the young man that made him sure the rebuff she had just given him was intentional. Not that she had quite meant this at the beginning; but now that it was done she felt glad of the excuse the presence of the children had given her to avoid him.

She redeemed her promise to them, though with an absent mind and heart ill at ease. But the children seemed to miss some of the usual spirit in the narration, hard as she tried to feign the interest she did not feel. As their attention flagged and drowsiness claimed their heavy eyelids, she was not sorry to turn her effort at entertainment into the channel of song. So she went over the principal favorites until the two restless heads were at last quiet on the pillow. How sweet and cherubic the round, infantile faces looked with the light rings of hair tossed about! and she was free to give rein to her own troubled thoughts.

She had lately been ridiculing the weakness of superstitions, yet it was in instinctive reaching out for comfort and sympathy that she opened the old Bible and put a finger on a line to explain, to cheer, to illumine her in her course. She was startled by the words that looked out at her as if

in warning. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The words had never before been fraught with any deep meaning. There was a volume of fresh, half-understood experience suggested by that text; and, as she sat, abandoning herself to her deep dejection, Jemmy stirred, asking for a drink of water. She had neglected to provide any; and urging him to wait patiently for her return, she went down to the dining-room for it.

She was lightly shod, and reached the side-board with scarcely a rustle; but, while she stood there feeling in the dark for a glass, her attention was attracted by voices from the veranda immediately outside. She could not hear what Mrs. Dow said; she could only hear Nathaniel's reply.

"Now, Aunt Florence, there's no need of your talking in this strain. You ought to know me well enough to know I'm not a very pliable character. I'm not likely to fall in with any one's plans excepting my own." Nathaniel spoke in an easy, matter-of-fact way, uttering the words between puffs at his cigar. "I have often told you, Aunt Florence, I should never consent to take the house," he went on, in a firmer tone. "In the first place, there is no reason why you should not occupy it yourself yet for a great many years to come. And, in the next place, I have not the least claim to it. I should never consent to be burdened with it, penniless as I am. More than that, I could not afford to be." This doubtfully acquired property was surrounded, as far as the fact of its possession went, with a sort of distaste in his eyes; it was shrouded in mystery, though he loyally cherished too much confidence in his aunt to care to lift the veil.



"But don't you like Eliza?" queried Mrs. Dow, in a tone of evident disappointment. How could she be so childish? thought that young person, who was just leaving the room when those words reached her ears, and made her pause instinctively, half afraid that her own light movements would betray her whereabouts. "I have fancied that you two got along very nicely together," the widow continued.

"Why, yes, we do get along fairly well," Nat said, in a noncommittal tone. Yet there seemed something of defiance in his way of saying this.

"And you can't have eyes in your head if you don't see how pretty she is!"

"Oh, yes, she is pretty enough," said he, with an enigmatical little laugh. "Yes," he added slowly. "But Aunt Florence, allow me to remonstrate. You throw her at my head a little too patently. I don't mean now so much, but in the young lady's presence. Keep your broad demesne, Aunt Flo," added he, more lightly. "I won't be bribed. No, indeed, I won't take that elephant off your hands. Why be obstinate?"

"Do you call me obstinate, too?" said she, with a sad intonation in her voice. "Well, if I am to have the name, I will have the game. I won't give up my cherished purposes yet."

"You must where I am concerned," said he.

"Must? That word sounds natural from your lips. It is you who are obstinate. You are a true Dow. And it sounds as if you meant it. But Eliza admires you, Nathaniel."

"I am not so sure of it," returned he, quietly. This dodge, so successful with Benedick and Beatrice, did not seem to work in either case here, nor was it consistent with modern ideas of deli-



cacy in the minds of either of the parties practiced upon.

Nathaniel's quiet strength had always caused Florence Dow a certain wonder. How different he was from Frank! fully as much of a man, but without any of that restless self-seeking that marked the character of her son. Not that Frank was selfish exactly—she would fain not have believed so—but he was full of ambitions with which his mother could little sympathize; while there was between herself and Nathaniel the link that binds together all simple and noble natures.

“In other words, you tell me to go about my business,” said she, in reality chagrined, but yielding the point good-humoredly.

Eliza had just made a wild break for freedom; but a sudden and unexpected encounter with a chair made her heart stand still, and she sank for a moment on its welcome support. Nathaniel's voice was so clear; every word reached her.

“To tell the truth,” said he, “I don't think it best for outside parties to interfere in such affairs. You know the affections are wayward things. I know I never could fancy anybody myself just because my friends wanted me to. I hope to goodness you haven't been saying anything of this sort to that girl, Aunt Flo!” In fact, it had just occurred to him that here might be a solution of those distant and offish ways to himself that had so puzzled him this very evening.

Eliza would hear no more, but glided rapidly upstairs on her errand. Never had Jemmy received a more loving smile from his sister than now, when she found him sitting up in bed and calling crossly for her, in his half awake condition. Never had she been kinder than as he lay

and tossed and chattered wakefully for some time. But at last the child fell asleep, and she sank again into a deep dejection. It seemed to the poor girl that she was now called upon to drain the last drop in her cup of misery. Stung by her deep sense of humiliation, by the feeling of her complete dependence, the utter misery of her position overcame her, and tears could no longer be denied such relief as they brought. Sobbing violently, she threw herself upon the lounge, though making a determined effort, after the first paroxysm was over, to restrain any audible sob, for fear of disturbing the children; and worn out at length with the conflict of feeling, she fell toward morning into a fitful and uneasy slumber.

## VI

With the daylight things had partly righted themselves, and last evening's extreme sensitiveness and humiliation seemed to her to be exaggerated. Our troubles have a way of looking so much more tolerable in the morning—so much more tolerable and “to be endured,” to misquote Dogberry. As she tossed her soft brown hair up on her head, pinning it into place with a few dextrous touches of her slight fingers in a fashion that above the frill of her crisp dimity gown was very suitable to a warm morning, as well as being charmingly graceful in effect, Eliza regarded her own image in the glass with laughing eyes, wondering if she were a blighted being, and noticing that the darker shadows about her grey eyes and the paleness that was the result of two almost sleepless nights were beginning to show.

She had heard herself rejected, or as good as rejected. Listeners proverbially hear no good of themselves. Above all, she must endeavor not to show resentment. He was something of a flirt; Eliza did not blind herself to this; Millie had told the truth there. She had spoken with a knowledge of human nature deeper and better to be trusted than her own when she had warned her of thinking too much of their chance association, their accidental propinquity. Eliza now felt that she had made that foolish mistake; she had thought too much of a little politeness, of a few words of friendly interest, a glance or two of admiration, a tender word or so. She would try and show Mr.



Nathaniel Dow she was not such an inexperienced provincial as he had thought her. How to do that was the subject of much bitter and troubled thought with her while outwardly engaged in getting the two unruly children in order for the day.

It was a sultry day, and she felt especially languid. Getting the children ready for breakfast always seemed a task to her unaccustomed hands, and this morning they were especially hard to manage. Jemmy had stolen out of bed at the first golden shoots of the sun-god, and had been standing in his bare feet and night clothing, in silent ecstasies over the gambols of a little colt that was within sight in the pasture, while his two sisters were still asleep in the hot, bright room. But he was kept rather quiet by his interest in this queer little creature, which appeared to be all head and legs, and which pranced around the staid-looking grey mare with an unsteady and awkward sportiveness which Jemmy considered exquisitely comical. It was Nannie who proved the intractable one, and time and patience were exhausted before her sister succeeded in getting her mane of rich brown hair into presentable condition; and by this time a glance at the little watch at her belt had told Eliza she had nothing to fear from the presence of one person at the breakfast table. The closing of the hall door added its quota of information that Nathaniel had departed for the day.

"Nathaniel told me to say good-bye to you for him. He won't be down again for some time. He intends to go up into the Catskills with his mother," Mrs. Dow said, as she took up her budget of letters and papers. It was her only reference to the evening before, and she went on out of the room.

Eliza had a few light duties to detain her for a while; and then, much heated by the exertion and feeling a dislike to the confinement of four walls, she took a book and followed by the children, started for a secluded spot in the garden, intending to read while they played near. But her thoughts were too much perturbed to admit of any such concentration, and the words made no impression upon her mind, though she sat looking at the printed page, on which the shadow of dancing leaves and the glancing spots of sunshine filtering through them were thrown from the pear tree above her head. It was just the atmosphere to be favorable to dreaming.

The young girl could not keep her mind from running on that curious Dow past. What sort of people were they, these dead and gone Dows, who had left so sombre a heritage behind them? The dim wish, which had been so strong in her the night before to turn her back upon the problems about her and to return for good to the safe, home nest, returned with all its old force. From where she sat she had a view of the back of the roomy old house, three stories in the main part, with the lower wing and kitchen stretching out, and the lattices and roofs of rambling verandas with stairs winding down into the garden. The house in its present form had been the growth of years. Eliza did not trust too implicitly all the stories told of the family; yet there were some of those dark annals that were unfortunately not to be doubted; recitals of sinfulness and pride and mystery gathering to an issue, as of a sort of ulcer of morbid and unhealthy growth, in one or two dark deeds of passion and crime that were supposed to give to the names with which they



were associated a thrilling traditional interest. For the Dows had always been proud of that checkered past, viewing it with complaisant leniency; experiencing a strange, psychological fascination in watching those traits crop out in each other that had once led to so tragic a result: laughing at the family anecdotes over dinner tables laid in that comfortable old style of hospitality described as "groaning," itself, while it lightened the hearts and held aloof the cares of many a wordly spirit; telling the dark tales and prizing the sinister collection along with the family Bible in its heavy brass mountings, and the eight-day clock that could play tunes and tell the day of the month. They had been brought up face to face with this dream-like shadowy presence, and had come to contemplate it without shrinking. It had little more effect upon them than to quicken their young steps in a dark room, or call up a light shudder and flutter of half-welcome fright and dread when nights were stormy.

Eliza was seated in a small, pagoda-like summer-house at one end of a long walk. As she looked up this walk with its hedges of rose bushes that earlier in the year were all alive with sweetness and color she realized suddenly that this had been the scene of that dreadful event of which, as a small child, she had heard a dim account. Since then she had not heard it often referred to. Now the whole occurrence forced itself upon her mind with a strange insistency. Yes, here was very nearly the spot where it had happened; so she had been told. Thomas Dow had been giving a dinner to some of his political cronies. He had gone into politics, and office holding had proved a costly matter to him, drawing him into much convivial-



ity, and acting as a constant source of disagreement between himself and his wife. The latter had not been present, but as the day had been a warm one, she had gone out with her little son Frank for a stroll in the garden. She had not been aware that they were in sight from her husband's seat at the table. His companions, who had been growing more and more intoxicated, for they were celebrating a party victory, could only testify that Tom Dow had all at once appeared much excited by something he had seen; that he had started up with a smothered ejaculation, and gone with hasty steps out on to the veranda that led to the garden. The next they had known a shot had rung out, calling them all to their feet and sending them out to find their host lying on the ground at a short distance from the steps, and his wife alone with him, a staring, pale, horror-struck woman, her arms around him, and her light muslin dress dyed with his blood. She had been heard to cry out in the first frenzy of grief and remorse, "It is all my fault, my fault! I am wholly responsible! Oh, what can I do? How can I ever live if he dies? I shall feel as though I had killed him!"

After those first moments of excitement, when the report had been spread broadcast, and the strong arm of the law had entered the hushed house, and called the widow from the death chamber to lay its iron grip upon her, she had told a different tale. It was a plain straightforward one from which she did not deviate in the least, but it did not gain implicit belief. Her account of the occurrence was that as she and her little son were walking in the garden in sight, though she did not know it, of the dining-room windows, she

had been joined by Jarvis Marshall, who had come to bid her good-bye before sailing on a long cruise to China and the East Indies. The talk between them had been short, though Jarvis had lingered long enough to repeat to her some of the rumors in regard to her husband, trying to convince her how unworthy he was of her love and faith. When she had refused to listen he had become angry and violent, and in the heat of their colloquy she had not noticed that they had come near the house. It had only been her wish to escape from him until suddenly her attention had been attracted by seeing her husband, evidently flushed with wine, coming out on the steps with a revolver in his hand pointed at her companion. To avert trouble, she had instinctively tried to shield Marshall, urging him, at the same time, to go away. As her husband came within reach she had arrested his hand and tried to hold him, but her intercession for her old lover had only seemed to madden him. Drawing away from her he had again aimed his revolver at Marshall, who upon that had rushed upon him, and there had ensued a struggle for the possession of the weapon, in which it had been discharged. She thought the revolver was in Marshall's hands at the moment of discharge, but she felt quite sure it was accidental, and that Jarvis Marshall had not intended to do anything but disarm her husband.

At first there had been no one to substantiate the truth of this statement. Of the gentlemen who had been at the dinner there had not been any who could give a clear and connected idea of the occurrence. Jarvis Marshall had gone on his cruise, and before any action was taken to summons him he was sailing away for the East.



Frank, a boy of five years old at the time, had left his mother for the moment and run off playing with a big dog, while Margaret Dow had been in her own room, and had only come out at the sound of the shot, as the others did. The trial, as Eliza knew, had been conducted by the best of metropolitan lawyers. The Dows had spared no money in her poor cousin Florence's defense. It had been a hard-fought contest, for much in the evidence had been against her; the most damaging thing being the proof of the recent transfer of the house, which, as furnishing in the mother's wish to secure possession of this for her son, a sufficient motive for the act, was much enlarged upon by the prosecuting attorney.

Yet the acquittal had come easily enough at the last, the case turning unexpectedly upon the testimony of a man employed about the place, who, while putting away his garden tools for the night in a box set in the shrubbery near had been a witness of the whole affair; had recognized Marshall, and had seen him start and run rapidly away after the shot was fired. He had given chase, he said, but had been unable to overtake him, and having been called away to attend the funeral of an uncle in South Hampton he had remained there and so had heard nothing more of the incident. Being an illiterate man who seldom saw the papers his ignorance of his own duty in the matter and the poor lady's extreme need had kept him from coming forward with his testimony, not realizing that he had in his possession the very link needed in the chain to prove her guiltless. There was, however, a large reading public somewhat divided in opinion on the subject. Of those in Setauket who had personally known the unfor-



fortunate parties involved, could they not find plenty of arguments to prove that one of such low origin as this woman whom they had seen elevated to a high position and influence over their heads, might be guilty of anything? Yet those who saw in her a modern Clytemnestra found little to strengthen their theory as time went on, and they saw no signs of Jarvis Marshall's return. But then, theories often seem to be able to stand without the supporting prop of fact; for,

“Faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast,  
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.”

Eliza had been seated there some time, and in the preoccupation of her thoughts she had not noticed that the intermittent staccato the children had kept up had been succeeded by older voices. As a trellis covered with grapevines shut out the figures from her view it was not until the tones of those colloquists were raised in more excitement that they attracted her attention.

“It seems very little to ask of you. I think you owe it to me. Why will you not do it?” She recognized the widow's voice.

“To what end? It is forgotten now. Why rake up that dead and buried affair?” A man's voice answered, so low that Eliza's ears were strained to catch the words.

“Dead and buried? Yes, it is easy to talk! I do not regard it so. No, it is a danger, for me—for both of us, until we face the truth, and the whole truth. There must be no half measures; nothing else will serve.”

“Why do you worry? That doesn't sound worthy of a woman of your strength of mind,” the man's voice said.

“Don’t overrate my strength of mind,” she responded, excitedly; and the lessening noise of footsteps and voices announced that they were withdrawing from the vicinity of the summer-house, and Eliza held her breath for fear she should betray her presence so near them. Only one solution occurred to her, that it was Frank Dow to whom his mother was apparently so hopelessly and passionately appealing. The young girl took little note of the words at the time; she knew that Frank Dow had been expected, and dread of herself encountering him, at first overpowered everything else. But the words she had overheard had left a distinctly unpleasant impression, that momentarily grew stronger. Great as her feeling of dislike and prejudice had come to be toward Frank Dow, she experienced a sensation of surprise that he could have so degenerated. This strange interview seemed to her to add another, and that the most mysterious cloud of all, to the gloom that had begun to overshadow their once pleasant if uneventful life.

The pressing need of looking for the children brought her out from her cover before long to find the garden lying in sunny quiet and solitude, though she could hear the distant click of some garden tool to tell that work there had not been entirely suspended. Not finding the children in the house she suspected that they might have wandered off to the pastures, where she followed them. She discovered them in a corner of the big meadow where the brook ran limpidest—a condition more favorable for the gentians Nan had just found than for dry shoes and stockings—and their sister quickened her steps in their direction when she saw how near was their vicinity to the old Alder-



ney bull, Jake. They were not averse to her proposition that they should return home, as the period of their visit was about over; though Jemmy reluctantly saw the last of the little colt as they went up through the lane, where it could be seen lying down in the tall grass of a side hill, looking, with its head erect, like a knight in chess, as Nannie observed. Both of them were sorry not to bid the kind lady of the house good-bye, but they acquiesced when their sister told them she was engaged, and that it was better for them not to hunt her up. Eliza bethought herself at the last of something it was necessary for her to say to the man Martin before she went away.

She found him and his assistant together. Martin was sitting down on a garden bench, smoking his pipe.

"Is this allowable, Miss?" was his question.

"I don't know as there is any objection. It is not allowed around the stable, of course. There are very stringent regulations in regard to that."

"There's no smoke without some fire, eh? But I am not a stableman. So there is not that difficulty." His manner was jocose, watchful, sinister. It seemed to her—odious thought—as if he patronized her. She gave her orders very explicitly about some transplanting that was to be done, trying to hold her own against the man's curious manner. He made no direct reply.

"Young miss is a great hand at gardening," he remarked, instead, taking his pipe out of his mouth for a moment, as he knocked out the contents preparatory to a refilling. "You'd think she was just out of a nursery." Eliza's eyes flashed; but the man went on, quietly, as he filled his pipe. "There's where I learned what I know; in a nur-



sery—a great one—one of the largest in the States. I tell you the mail business they do in that place is something extraordinary. They send plants and bulbs and seeds all over the country.”

Carl, to whom he communicated this intelligence, was an Alsatian of French proclivities, which he announced by troling the Marseillaise as he went for the cows. He was stupid as Teutons can sometimes be, and cast a glance of admiring respect and youthful interest combined at the young lady, as he responded, “Miss looks yung to know so much about blants and dings.”

Eliza was somewhat mollified by Carl’s evident good intentions; but it was plainly derogatory to her dignity to be so much discussed. She finished her directions and returned to her young charges.

## VII

They took the way home by the beach, which was shorter than the grey, sunlit road, but it obliged them to pass through the old graveyard, with its willow trees and sunken, irregular stones. Eliza was familiar with every foot of the old spot, yet today her glance fell upon some of the oldest inscriptions with a certain unwilling interest. The earliest one of all, that of Maria Douw, relict of the late Fob Janse Douw, the sailor whose body had been lost at sea, fixed the date of the naturalization of the family to the soil as some time prior to the year 1707, the date of the widow's death. This little old stone, of a soft, crumbly variety, had lost all its edges and the inscription was almost illegible. There was a lordly column or two of marble and a stile whereby one might get into the place and another where one might get out—an impulse so sure to follow upon the first that it was a happy thought that placed them in such convenient juxtaposition. The stretch of beach lay almost directly beyond, with sand enough for walking, though there were stonier portions, and some grand old boulders, shaggy with seaweed and encrusted with barnacles. Their brown shoulders were now half covered by the tide as it came creeping in.

Eliza walked slowly under her Japanese umbrella, while the children ran back and forth in their search for such nautical treasures as the last tide had thrown up on the sand. Now it was a starfish with broken points, now a stranded jelly-

fish, no longer lovely and iridescent, but simply a gelatinous mass which Nannie loudly adjured her brother not to touch, having once had an experience of the painful method of defense some of them can practice. Eliza was full of perturbed thought, and did not notice that the morning was drifting away with their slow progress until they turned into the village, past the disused wharf, and so through narrow ways and devious turns that brought them out upon a broad, well-shaded side street of the town.

They had seen a schooner coming up the bay with all sails set, and all three had lagged the more to watch its advance; and after they turned their steps away the two children still snatched eager glimpses, from among the trees, of the white sails or the decks alive with activity and bustle. No sooner had they entered the house than their father came hurriedly in in pursuit of something, and called to all who would to come down with him to the harbor to see it come in. Silas Jakway was a man of mild manners and refined appearance, though he was only a ship's carpenter by trade. He was always kind in his family, but there was very little of sentiment or demonstration among them, and Eliza did not expect more than the word of recognition with which he greeted her before he went out again, with all the younger fry eagerly following at his heels. She was left with her mother and the two girls next in age to herself.

Eliza longed to open out all her perplexities; but an instinctive shrinking from her mother's narrower view kept her from it. She was now impervious to any hints about Nathaniel, and only mentioned him in the most casual way. She was



willing to relate anything else of interest that had happened at Dow House, and so it came that she told at length about the fright that her cousin Florence had had the evening before the last, and of her hallucination in thinking she had seen the face of her old lover, Jarvis Marshall.

"I declare! If that wasn't a queer notion of Florence's. I hope she isn't going to believe in spiritualism now she's getting along in years," was her mother's comment. She could give but a divided interest to anything, and the conversation went on under the slight disadvantage of her being detained in the pantry by her duties there. She was rolling out pastry, and the knocking and whacking of the rolling pin made it necessary that Eliza should raise her voice, and even repeat some items of information, as she continued her relation.

"I thought perhaps it was the gardener who looked in at the window; just curiosity, you know! He might do that. He's a queer man, anyway."

"Who? Andrew?" Mrs. Jakway emerged temporarily from the pantry the finished pie held ready on the palm of her hand to be consigned to the oven.

"Oh, no, Andrew's gone. Didn't you know that? I thought I'd been home since then. We have a new one, and I don't like him near so well. I thought he meant to be impudent this morning. He said I looked as if I was just out of a nursery. I suppose he didn't like to have me order him around. Do I look so awfully young, Mammy?"

Mrs. Jakway laughed.

"You don't look so dignified's you might," she said. "Seems to me you look about the same's you did when you were twelve years old. But

I don't believe he meant so much by that. More likely he meant a real nursery. And that makes me think, Jarve Marshall's written to Lawyer Suydam lately, from somewhere's near Rochester, up in Genesee County. He wants his money sent there. You know the family thought that he might have been lost at sea, they didn't hear from him for so long."

"Why, yes, cousin Florence thought that, too," Eliza cried, with animation. "So they've heard from him. How absurd in cousin Flo to think she saw him!"

"Her nerves are getting unhinged, I suppose, having had so much trouble," said her mother, charitably. "It may make some difference to Florence, too. Jarve and Nicholls—Clint' Nicholls, you know—Florence's husband—went into that stone quarry together, and they do say it's turned out to be worth a good deal. Seems ridiculous for him not to come and claim his property, doesn't it? Lawyer Suydam has the place in his care, you know. He's had it ever since Mis' Marshall died. She didn't leave any will. But what I started to say was, he says he works in a nursery. Genesee county's full of nurseries, I guess. But what a pretty new waist that is, Lizzie."

Eliza was very ready to exhibit whatever she had on, for in the company of a mother and two sisters with a much larger share of good looks to set off than they had means to do it with, the talk soon naturally came to dress. All the Jak-way girls were pretty, though, as it was often remarked, Eliza's was so much more refined a type. To be back again among the practical wants that made her father bowed as if conscious always



of some yoke, and her mother's brow lined while she was still scarcely of middle age, made the girl feel as if her own troubles were egotistical and over-strained, and the great desideratum of being sheltered and cared for were all she had a right to expect. It always took off the ideality of life for her to go home. In the face of their narrower portion she felt a little convicted herself that the round of daily work in which she saw them engaged, the plain, bare house, the inelegant confusion that surrounds a large family of growing children, unless means are large and the management good, did so much to reconcile her with her own lot. Yet, today, she felt that there was a homely content here, too, and in the first deep trouble and need of her life she yearned for sympathy, impossible as it would have been for her to have confided her perplexities to either mother or sisters.

"I'm glad you came, Eliza," said her mother, as she went busily back and forth from stove to pantry, baking and putting down fruit, notwithstanding the heat of the morning. "I just got into cutting out a new dress for Sarah yesterday, but I didn't know how to make it, and I thought I'd put it by and maybe you'd come down and give me some new ideas. Sarah wanted a shrimp pink, but I tell her the season's so late now she wouldn't get enough wear out of it to pay for making it up. So I got her a plum color. I think it'll be a good color to wear."

Sarah was in the senior class at the High School, and being just at the age when her girlish bloom was beginning to attract attention, and to excite her own admiration as it looked out at her from the glass, she had longings for dress that had



never been satisfied, though the plum color promised to come the nearest to realization.

“We don’t have a chance to know much of the fashions,” explained she. She was always a little strange with her sister when she came back, and now looked shy and awkward, working her shoulders in her dress as she talked. “Captain Phillips’ daughter has a city friend to stay with her, though, and she has a dress made in the way I’d like mine, just like some of the queer old pictures in the parlor at Dow House. Don’t you know them? Those with the full skirt and a short waist and sleeves with a frill.”

Eliza smiled, acknowledging that Sallie would look very pretty gotten up in quaint fashion like Miss Pursell Dow, or some of the other old miniatures.

“But, Sallie,” said she, “I think you study quite as well as if you had a more extensive peep at the fashions. Remember, you must try and keep up with your class; you know you want to teach. Don’t do as I have done!” Eliza spoke earnestly, for she heard that Sarah was disposed to neglect her studies. A career of happy independence might be open to her young sister, if she would only appreciate her advantages; but Sarah was not very willing to profit by another’s experience, especially when that experience looked so attractive at a distance.

Mrs. Jakway brought forth the plum color, and they adjourned to a cooler inner room to cut and design the new gown. It was a good thing for Eliza to be obliged to concentrate her thoughts upon these simple, every-day matters—(perhaps Sarah might have objected that plum-colored gowns were not every-day matters to her!)—and

suggestion soon led to execution. So the afternoon was spent in planning and sewing, much to Sallie's satisfaction, and her sister's increased tranquillity of mind. She carried back with her that night more of a feeling of well-doing at the thought of Sallie's joy in her own appearance the ensuing Sunday than had been hers for some time. Her own existence did not seem so useless and selfish, though she still felt that there was very little she could do to brighten the lot of those at home.

It was not until she neared the steps again on reaching Dow House that the oppression, that any sense of mystery casts over us, returned to her as she recollected the conversation of which she had been an unwilling listener; just then, however, her cousin's voice reached her ears, speaking in a commonplace way to one of the servants in the kitchen. How reassuring the accustomed, the commonplace is to us all. Eliza looked at her cousin when she met her a few moments after with much the same curious interest we might feel toward one of whom we had just been dreaming some strange and fantastic dream.

They sat alone at dinner, and Eliza communicated eagerly what she had learned.

"Oh, I heard something you'll be interested to hear, Cousin Flo! Jarvis Marshall isn't dead. He's written a letter from Genesee County—that's somewhere up near Rochester, you know, mamma said—and he wants his money sent him there. His property's in lawyer Suydam's hands. Why don't you go and see about it, Cousin Florence? They say it's turned out to be worth a good deal. You ought to see about it!"

"Who told you all this?" her cousin asked, rather sharply.

"Mamma told me. Everybody knows it."

"I think it's time I did, certainly, if all the gossips know it."

"Oh, Cousin Flo, you know mamma isn't a gossip! But, of course, everybody is interested, because we all thought he was dead. I thought you thought so, too. You said so the other night."

"Oh, yes, I'm glad to learn he isn't dead, of course," Mrs. Dow said.

Eliza was disappointed that her information had not been received with more effusion. She had expected it would have produced much more effect.

"You act so queerly, Cousin Florence! As if some one had told you before!"

"No, indeed, you're first on the field, Lizzie," her cousin said, more affectionately. "I'll look up the matter of the property. There's no harm in seeing Mr. Suydam, though I don't believe much in that part of it. And how did you spend the day, Lizzie? I missed you. I drove over to Yaphank and had a lovely drive. I was thrown in with an awfully nice young clergyman over there. I wished you had been along."

Eliza did not acknowledge these implied good wishes directly.

"I'm going to work harder at my painting, Cousin Florence," was what she said.



## VIII

One week glided into another and that again went by, and still Nathaniel Dow did not come down to Setauket. Eliza had had time to regain some measure of her old equanimity, though it was useless for her to pretend to herself that she was quite the same. Acting upon her new resolves she tried to occupy every moment of the sultry September days with some employment, until the constant confinement began to tell more and more upon her, and she lost both flesh and color. Mrs. Dow could not help seeing a change, but as Eliza had lately become rather more reserved with herself, she hesitated to urge the girl to confide in her, being really at a loss as to any cause for the alteration. And then she was at present so much absorbed in her own anxieties, that she gave the less thought to what was going on around her. Eliza sometimes met her cousin's eyes fixed upon her—met and shrank from them with an involuntary feeling of defiance.

The young girl was becoming aware that there was something in their life that left a vaguely unpleasant train of impressions. This was the singularly good understanding that seemed to exist between Mrs. Dow and the new gardener. Why should she see them one day walking slowly down the garden path together, talking earnestly and evidently so buried in their conversation that they did not even see that she was approaching? Why view them again from a knoll in the grove whither she had gone to sketch, seated side by

side on a secluded garden bench below her out of sight from the house? After the first incident, Eliza had been curious, and had made some light, half-joking reference to it, expecting to have light thrown upon it, as a matter of course. But Mrs. Dow's manner when thus taken by surprise had betrayed to her immediately that the subject was an unwelcome one. In consequence of the way in which this question had been parried she had lacked the courage to speak of Frank Dow's visit, though she had felt quite sure in her own mind that he had been there.

This state of things affected Eliza strangely. It was all that was needed to repel her rather diffident sympathy and affection. She was more homesick than ever. Their old life, which, quiet as it had been, had at least been peaceful and open, was becoming more and more a thing of the past. The young girl could not help being influenced by this mystery, and it added to the estrangement that had always conduced to hold her and her cousin apart.

Mrs. Dow had been to Mr. Suydam, but she had not been very communicative of the result of their interview. The lawyer had confirmed the popular report as to the letter, which she had been allowed to read, and it was quite true that there would be some little property—a few thousands, finally, perhaps—coming to herself and Frank in the future, from her first husband's estate. Florence Dow told about this with so much less than her usual energy and enthusiasm, that it was plain to Eliza that there was intentional reserve, and somewhat offended, she forebore to express a further interest.



There had been a sudden change in the weather, which by shutting them in from the outdoor air had made their life seem still more depressing. We all know a cold week in September, with rain off and on. The earth is brown, the skies are laden, and the day vanishes with a little show of eagerness, taking its heavy thoughts off with it, as if it knew it had been but dull company. Just at the last it is apt to brighten up for awhile, with a few repentant, futile gleams of sunset. Inside the windows are shut down, and a light blaze is welcome on the hearth, lighting up the early dusk of the room.

On one of these cold days as it neared nightfall Eliza threw a warm wrap about her shoulders and went out for a walk. She had accomplished a good piece of work during the day, sitting for hours at her painting, and now felt the tension of mind and nerves sure to ensue upon prolonged, and especially, unaccustomed application.

She did not feel inclined to go in the direction of the sea, which looked black and dreary, with sea gulls whirling about the cliffs and the spray leaping high in sight; but turned down a lane marked with wheel-ruts in the grass, which had been kept cropped by the two pretty Jersey cows as they went flirting their tails from the barn to the pasture. There was something in the departing day, with its threatening, overcast skies and chill free wind, that acted as a tonic on the girl's nerves, and it was with lighter spirits than she had had for some time that she pursued her course. A few blackberries beguiled her here, some plumes of goldenrod there, and she had not gone far before she came to a stand near a ripened field of oats that were bending and rustling in the breeze. She



surveyed it a short time with her mind full of other thoughts before it occurred to her that she had been wishing for some of the graceful spears for a copy in some work she was doing. Why not get enough of them so that she could also use some of them for decoration? She knew of one or two places where it was very desirable to cover up the old, streaked wall in some such way. The proprietress of Dow House was, as a rule, more ready and willing to give to charitable objects and to further missionary enterprises among the distant heathen than she was to put out money upon her own rambling mansion.

The low stone wall bordering the field, to be reached through a thicket of wild asters and goldenrod, offered at first a decided obstacle to her covetous plans; and she would probably have given up her idea altogether if she had not noticed that one of the large stones had fallen out of place. By applying a little force to it an opening was easily effected, the stone rolling over into the field beyond. "Open Sesame," she laughed to herself, as she contemplated the vandalism of which she had been guilty; but it was so simple a matter now to surmount the wall that she was soon busily engaged in helping herself to the long stalks, and was not aware that any one was approaching until a voice near her made her start and turn, her cheeks growing red in the sudden surprise.

"Well, Ruth, what success? You appear to have gleaned to some purpose." A moment after, he laughed aloud. "What made you start so? You looked as guilty as if I were the farmer who had caught you trespassing. Imagine me with plenty of soil on my boots, and a straw in my

mouth, and perhaps you can tell me what you would have said for yourself if you had actually been caught in the act."

"I know gleaners are seldom bold enough to enter an unharvested field. But I wanted some about the house, and especially I wanted some of them to copy, and so I was tempted to come in and help myself." She laughed an embarrassed, agitated little laugh, still trembling from the surprise of his sudden coming, and she was thankful for the intervening distance that made her feel secure from his observation, as she turned away and went on with her occupation.

"A feminine reason. Eva had no better. He tempted me and I did eat," said he, feeling the doubts as to his welcome founded on her rather inexplicable behavior when he had seen her last somehow insensibly melt away. "'They are very pretty. Oats always seem to me to speak of an every-day, practical comfort and plenty, less poetical than wheat, not the 'bearded grain' at all—"

"Oh, beards are not indispensable," Eliza interrupted, catching the words, as she stood looking about her as if meditating further onslaught. Her eyes only came around to his face as if by accident with a flitting, merry challenge, at which he laughed a little, running one hand through the waving brown hair that adorned his own chin. Such a handsome beard, like that of a Greek statue! No girl could be unaware of that.

"I should think the owner of these fields might object to having his oats cradled by your dress skirts," he soon observed, as he leaned his elbows contemplatively upon the fence.

"It does seem rather conscienceless," Eliza admitted, becoming conscious for the first time of



the flattened wake she was leaving behind her. She had thrown aside her red shawl before she climbed the fence, and now stood in her dark dress, with the feathers in her hat fluttering in the wind, and her hair blowing about her face. Nathaniel still leaned upon the wall looking at her, and did not speak at once, and when he did his words showed whither his thoughts had been straying.

“What a change this is since the last time I was down,” he remarked. “I can’t realize that it is only two weeks. It has seemed an age.”

“Yes, how sudden this change was!” Eliza said, ignoring the latter part of his remark intentionally. “It was such a great change, and was so unexpected; just as if some one had been playing on an organ, and while you were enjoying all the beautiful harmonies and were all unprepared, the organist should suddenly let out all the stops, and startle you by a great outburst of sound.”

Eliza did not know how this was received, simply because she did not look; she only knew that he said, after a moment, of silence, “Yes, there is a great change. It looks as if there would be another storm tonight. We must go down on the beach, if possible, before it comes, and see the waves. They must be something grand.”

He looked at her as he spoke, but Eliza did not meet the deep gaze. She felt that his thoughts had been preoccupied, and blushed sensitively to have been so far carried away from her usual reserve as to have spoken of her childish fancies. A sudden recollection of the lady who wrote such original letters—Millie’s gifted correspondent—thrust itself upon her, and came to cast a damper over the gay mood that the encounter with him



and her own enjoyment of the boisterous, chill wind had together conspired to produce. She had caught sight of a look of tender, softened, even anxious abstraction upon his face, and the perversity of jealous pain with which this thought had pierced her had made calm reasoning an impossibility for the moment. Yes, no doubt that was where his thoughts were. Why had he not stayed there, if he could not tear himself away, even in spirit?

“And now, the immediate question before this excited community is, how am I to get out?” said she, intentionally ignoring what he had said, and contemplating the wall before her with a comically unfavorable glance. With her hair and skirts blowing about her she did indeed suggest an “excited community,” as she had called herself. It did not seem quite so easy to surmount now as when there was no one to observe her movements; but she was a country-bred young woman, and with the assistance of his hand made light work of it—so light as to afford only the most momentary glimpse of a delicate foot and ankle.

“This isn’t exactly ‘comin’ thro’ the rye,’ is it?” Nathaniel said, with a bright smile. How was it the girl would not recognize the tender meaning of that look? And yet perhaps it was only the natural feminine feeling of vexation at finding that her dress was caught, and being obliged to loosen it with what grace and patience she could summon, that made her seem so unresponsive, so indifferent and stupid.

“No, and we can’t call it coming to one’s oats, as it is only foraging upon some one else’s. Yet I am so triumphant when I think what a fine orna-

ment they will make in several places where I have already seen them in my mind's eye that I can't feel exactly penitent for my theft."

She had been loosening her dress from where it had caught, and now accepted the shawl he had picked up, allowing him to put it around her shoulders, though she would not notice the little air of particularity with which he did so.

"It was this spot of color in the landscape that caught my eye and told me where I should find you," said Nathaniel. "I saw it as I came through the dummy-track. You must have wondered how I found you out. What has gone on since I was down here last?"

They were walking along now, and an awkward silence seemed settling upon both.

"Gone on? Would we so far do violence to our natures as to have anything go on?" said Eliza, with vivacity, the bitterness of that jealous feeling still rankling. "No, indeed, we are more true to ourselves than that!"

"True to yourselves? That is an excellent thing to be," said he, smiling. "Thou canst not then be false to any man," playfully, but with an eager, yet half doubtful look into her face, the blood mounting slightly to his own.

"No, falsehood is not our besetting sin," Eliza could not help saying, though she had meant to be so worldly-wise, so cool and indifferent. That sweet, rapt, far-away look that she had surprised in Nathaniel's eyes had aroused a force the strength of which she had never been called upon to resist before, and she was borne along by its current. "We are not educated up to it, probably. We are too unsophisticated and countrified. We leave that to our city friends."



Her companion was puzzled and silenced. The satirical tone did not seem natural to Eliza, though he had known her to indulge in something of it once or twice before. She was evidently put out, he could not imagine for what reason, though as a young man with not exactly an under-estimate of himself he felt a flattering hope that his own long absence from Setauket might have been the real cause at work. This suspicion helped to console him in the perception that his little attempts at sentiment, at pleasant nothings, had all been snubbed. Yet he was more discomfited than he cared to own.

"I believe you've never forgiven me something I once said about the town and the country. As if I meant any of you!" he exclaimed, at last. "It's an old fight between the town and the country mouse. But I don't think of any of you as country people. Upper-class people, who have so much communication with city life, are in reality very much in touch with city people nowadays." There was the little touch of class feeling that all Dows possessed in this. He took out his watch and looked at it. "I judge it must be near the dinner hour, my watch says seven," he remarked.

He paused a moment, and drew the girl's attention to the sunset, where in the western sky stripes of cumulous, massed up indigo and yellow were streaked along the horizon; and above was a soft, pinkish grey sky with one small, bright star already visible. Then, even while they were looking, came still more brilliant fire, and the cloud above shutting down, of bluer and bluer indigo, and the star shining ever momentarily clearer. But look! coming toward it great threatening masses of cloud, lurid and reddish on the margin—a fell purpose edged with insinuation.

The girl beside him turned to him with a stronger impulse of confidence. "I hope nothing is going to happen—nothing bad, I mean. I feel a sort of foreboding," she confessed.

"You superstitious, Miss Jakway? I am surprised! I didn't think it of you. I don't see any reason for foreboding, unless you are depressed at the thought of more rain, which we shall most certainly have, sooner or later. I hope there will be nothing worse, and I shan't be the one to predict it. I didn't come down here to be a bird of ill omen. I am willing to predict, however, that I shall eat a good dinner."

The smoke from the chimneys of the house was curling up among the treetops. The red gleam of the open-grate fire in the sitting-room could be caught between the branches.



## IX

They were all seated at table when Eliza joined them, and Mrs. Dow looked up with an air of interest as she entered, asking how it was that they had come in together. While Nathaniel was explaining how he had found Miss Jakway in her neighbor's oat field, the widow's transparent satisfaction in it all roused again the perverse obstinacy of the girl. Yes, no doubt it all seemed to her to be working well. Had she no thought for her, Eliza, that she should rejoice in seeing her put into such a false position? Nathaniel saw it clearly, she felt. Indeed, was that not what he had complained of? Throwing her at his head! Nothing of this absurd by-play escaped him, though he might be willing to amuse himself with it a little *en passant*. He might declare that he was not a pliable character, but she, no doubt, was regarded as so much wax, to be molded to their purposes.

Nathaniel seemed to be in the best of spirits. He praised impartially everything on the table from the fowls and cauliflower that were such a pleasant foretaste of Thanksgiving delicacies, to the rich red Indian pudding which was traditional in the Dow family, and somehow was never eaten in full perfection elsewhere, and the splendid dish of early grapes and great Bartlett pears, which Mrs. Dow said were part of a general shower that had nearly denuded the trees during this week of storm. He told excellent stories as they all sat over their fruit, one with an Irish brogue so capi-

tally imitated that it set them all to laughing. Yet that there was effort in this no close observer would have failed to detect; and once or twice Eliza met his eyes fixed in puzzled questioning upon her face. But Eliza would not meet the eyes, would not read their full meaning.

The sharp transition from glowing, mellow August to autumnal temperature and storm made the bright grate fire so welcome that as they came in where it was sending its dancing play of ruddy light through the large half-octagon sitting-room there was no regret expressed on the score of the finally departed summer. Margaret Dow sat down in a large chair near it, and taking up the shining little poker thrust open the lumps of coal until they sent up brighter gleams. It was Aunt Margaret's natural place, that chimney corner, and poking the fire an important part of her winter's occupation.

"This fire feels good," said she. "I was afraid I'd caught cold from the change, and so I took a little nux. These changes are very trying. We all ought to guard against them."

Mrs. Dow began to look over the little sheet of the "Setauket Daily Banner." Like a good many women who lead quiet lives, and are a good deal thrown in upon themselves, she was a faithful reader of the newspapers, looking out upon the doings of the world from her obscure corner of it with a clear vision, and taking a keen interest in politics. Her sympathies were at present strongly with the independent or "reform" branch of the Republican party; and the editor of the "Banner" being a red-hot partisan and "stalwart of the stalwarts," as the definition then was, she could scarcely keep silent as she read his diatribes and



invectives. Eliza bethought herself of her bunch of oats and brought it in, displaying it to the amusement of the older women.

"Why, what did you want of such a quantity?" asked Mrs. Dow, who never saw the aesthetic possibilities of cat-tails and peacock feathers.

"You'll see," said Eliza, mysteriously, as she stood, looking not unlike a figure of Ceres, while she made a thoughtful inspection of the apartment. "These old walls need covering up all over the house. There's a discolored spot there over those horses' heads that ought to be concealed. It came there during the last storm. That reminds me, Cousin Florence, there's a leak in the roof."

"Don't tell me so, Eliza. It's not exactly delicate in you to remind me of what a tumble-down old mansion I am mistress. If there's anything I hate it's being thrown upon the mercy of masons and carpenters."

"Of the Setauket variety, at any rate," remarked her nephew.

"Oh, there you are reflecting upon Setauket again, Nat. I don't believe Setauket is particularly distinguished in that respect. They are the same everywhere. There's always something to be done to a house, and it seems as if one was always waiting the pleasure of some of the gentry. I expect the old house will tumble down about our ears one of these days, and I don't know but that I shall let it."

"You'll get it off your hands in that way, Aunt Florence," Nat said, coolly. "Miss Jakway, I think some of your grain would be very appropriate up there," as he rose and stood on a chair to adjust it for her. "I wonder if Pharaoh's



horses ever had oats. They seem all mettle, as if they always fed on them; and yet, although we read of the remarkable fatness of the pastures in Egypt, I don't recollect anything about oats. Did you notice," he asked, as he descended from his elevation, "that I have opened the piano in a very suggestive manner?"

"Suggesting that you intend to sing for us, I hope," said she, with a decidedly mischievous look as she turned away. "But, won't it injure your voice to sing so soon after dinner?"

"Don't be too quick! I didn't say that was my intention. I thought perhaps you would play for us a little first. I have often heard you playing."

"But you know I don't play, Mr. Dow. I am not musical at all."

"For a person who is not 'musical at all' you play some things with wonderfully good expression. I think you are more modest than necessary. I have always liked Mendelssohn's 'Consolation,' and you play it delightfully, as well as a good many other things."

"Other things equally new," Eliza finished, with a sarcastic intonation. "Why don't you ask me for Beethoven's 'Farewell to the Piano'?" with pitiless self-scorn as she remembered her own slight privileges in the musical line. "Or 'Webster's Funeral March'? I used to play that until Cousin Frank said I should kill him, and then he would have put upon his tombstone the rede, for the sake of those who came after: 'Died of too much Webster's Funeral March.'"

"I hope you didn't stop on that account," said Nathaniel, with unexpected viciousness. No one else was an auditor of this little conversation.

"Well, no, I think I desisted when he threatened to put dynamite under the bass keys."

"I am not so exquisitely sensitive to well-worn strains as Frank. They may even be thread-bare and I should still love them, sometimes all the better. Well, I suppose we must humor you in your view that you are not a performer. Now you see I shall set you an example of making one's small talents go as far as they will. My repertoire is as hackneyed as yours, though perhaps not as classical. I am only a balladist, but Aunt Meg enjoys them. Aunt Margaret," turning to the room, "what shall I sing?"

Much delighted at the prospect of hearing him she designated several favorites, and Nathaniel dashed them off in a way of his own; a way not above criticism as to method and execution, but that proved him to have a true musical taste, and demonstrated the possession of an extremely rich, fine voice. "Across the far blue hills, Marie," was followed by "The Warrior Bold," and that in turn by some nautical songs, in a torrent of melodious sound such as the old walls never echoed excepting at his coming. Eliza was keenly alive to the influence of music, and though she did not give herself up to its sway as openly as Aunt Margaret did, those rich clear tones so moved her that, when he modulated into a new accompaniment, striking into the bright sweet strains, so expressive of hope and expectancy, of Blumenthal's "My Queen," she made some excuse, and unnoticed for a time even by the singer himself, glided from the room. Ah, it was easy enough for him to exercise this beautiful gift with which he had been dowered! He had been anxious to do so, she saw, and as if in contempt of the conceit thus displayed, Eliza's lip curled as she leaned against the hall window, looking out into



the night. Yet, in her heart she knew it was not conceit, mere love of display that was his motive, and that she herself was ungenerous. But her soul was in mutiny against this new, strong feeling it was so difficult to stem, to conquer. Why was he so bent upon her complete subjugation? Why could she not hate him? No, that was impossible, and she lingered at the window looking out into the night where the conflict of natural forces, the trees writhing in strange, dark, fantastic shapes, the low distant roar of the sea sending up its white films of spray and the scudding dark clouds seemed only in harmony with the unquiet she felt within. It was with something of defiance that she turned when the young man presently followed in pursuit.

“What, do you like your own thoughts best?” said he, apparently unthinking of the rudeness to himself of which she had been guilty in leaving the room while he was singing. “I always find it is an excellent sign when people care for solitude. It shows they have resources in themselves. What of the night, watchman?” He leaned one hand up against a side of the deep casement, bringing his face near hers as together they looked out into the storm. “I should like to see the water all lashed into a rage. It must be a fine sight,” continued he, with a boyish enthusiasm. “I am fortunate to be down here tonight. I am generally only here in fine weather. Fine weather, like spiritless, or too placidly amiable people, becomes tiresome if we have nothing besides. Have you ever been down on the beach in a storm?”

“Oh, yes, a thousand times,” was the reply. Eliza hardly intended to speak as stiffly and dryly as she did.



“Have you? It is years since I have seen a fine storm on the coast. I was out in one myself when I was a boy, and we considered ourselves lucky to escape, after we had been eight hours in peril of our lives.” Still the young girl expressed no interest, though she was afterward, when the full facts of the case were related to her, to admire the way in which Nathaniel Dow alluded to an occasion when he himself had acted a heroic part. “I was about to ask you if you would not get on something—your gossamer and rubbers, or else some warm wrap—and go down there with me. I feel just in the mood for battling with this wind. Do you ever have any wrecks off the point? It is just the night for them. Can’t I persuade you to go?”

Eliza seemed to hesitate; she glanced at the door of the sitting-room. “I’m afraid Aunt Florence would think I was crazy to go blowing about in this wind,” she objected, at last; and she began to play with the ribbons on the front of her dress with much confusion.

“Since when this regard for Aunt Florence’s opinion?” Nathaniel was tempted to say, but did not. “Aunt Florence has been young once herself, and I know very well was able to sympathize with the spirit of adventure in those days,” said he, eloquently. “I don’t believe she’s changed in that respect.”

Despite his blithe, off-hand manner, he was not at all at ease, and Eliza suddenly discovered that the strong hand near her trembled; and a glance into the handsome, flushed face revealed to her how earnest was the purpose he was endeavoring to accomplish. “What fatal instinct is it that impels us to play with our best affections as recklessly as the savages play with the life they have

not learned to make lovely?" enquires a writer. And with Eliza it was only an instinct, and a very indistinct one.

"But I am not adventurous," she objected, under the influence of this capricious feeling. "I never possessed any of that spirit. I suppose I lack combativeness. People tell me I do. I prefer peace and quiet and, as you say, solitude."

That quick, pained flush on the face of one we hold dear! What would we not give a moment after to efface the memory of it, to blot out the unkind word or act that has caused it! The girl thought back upon it afterward, wondering how she had found it possible to keep that unconcerned look and careless air when the moment after she had spoken she had so deeply repented it! But pride forbade her to go back now, and she did not attempt to palliate her rudeness, though she felt rather than saw that he turned and looked at her searchingly, as though to satisfy himself of her motives. He had counted much on that walk in the storm, which he had intended to make a precious and memorable one; yet he had vaguely felt or rather feared, that he would not be successful in carrying out his purpose. Just as he turned away without a word of comment, there was a noise of feet and voices outside, and a ring at the bell followed; and their neighbors, Dr. and Mrs. Fordyce, were ushered into the hall. Eliza stepped forward to receive them, and led the way in among the rest. Nathaniel followed them in.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. It blew you us this time," said Mrs. Fordyce, beaten into merry mood by the rough pranks of the wind. "I know I look rakish, but you mustn't draw any inference unfavorable to the sobriety of my habits,



from the state of my hat. It started straight enough."

"This is preparing for the equinoctial, isn't it?" asked the doctor.

"Why, it's early for it. The equinoctial doesn't come until about the twentieth," objected Miss Margaret Dow.

"Well, if the thermometer goes as low again as it did this morning, our grapes won't ripen much more than they have already," predicted he. "How are yours, Mrs. Dow?"

"About as usual; not sour grapes as yet, doctor. Eliza, bring in some of our muscadines." The company had seated themselves in a semi-circle about the bright grate fire, and the young lady soon produced an artistic looking dish of fruit, being followed from the dining-room by Myra with plates and napkins. Dr. Fordyce said he had not expected his remark to meet with so substantial a response, but he helped himself admiringly to some of the beautiful clusters, which he acknowledged were superior to anything he had raised as yet. His vines were becoming a pride with him, and he was ambitious to equal the products of the Dow place in time.

"These are grown in the open air," observed he. "Of course, I do not expect to raise anything like your Black Hamburgs. I want to thank you, for my patient, poor old Sydney, for those glorious bunches you sent him the other day. I happen to know that they were very much appreciated. By the way, I notice that you have a new gardener. He seems to be rather a queer customer. Does he understand his business thoroughly? Your last man was a *rara avis*. I used to count on getting some hints from him myself."

Mrs. Dow rose, and with that light, firm grace peculiar to herself, went to the large mahogany cabinet in the room, returning with a bottle of sherry and some wine glasses.

“Fruit alone seems cold comfort to offer any one on a night like this,” said she, as she began to pour out a glass. Eliza Jakway noticed that she had grown quite pale, and that her hand shook as she poured the wine for first one and then another of the circle; though as she sat down herself and sipped the generous amber liquid more of its natural color came back into her face. The doctor did not drop the subject, however, probably not having seen anything to lead him to suppose it an unwelcome one.

“Yes, I counted considerably upon the information I used to get from your other man—What was his name? Andrew? Sandy, you called him, didn’t you? Sandy McGee? So Sandy was convivial once too often in his habits? Well, I don’t wonder you lost patience, but if I could get him back I’d take him, if I were you, in spite of his pet weakness. All Scotchmen imbibe more or less; and he seemed to have natural gifts as a gardener. Sandy was my oracle; and how oracular he could be! But this man you have now strikes me as being a crusty sort of a fellow.” Dr. Fordyce balanced his plate and wine glass on one knee, pulling off the grapes deliberately with the other hand, warming into rather an expansive mood under the genial influences of the wine and the firelight. “My wife and I were watching him today as he was wheeling his wheelbarrow in sight of the windows, and she called my attention to his rolling gait, and asked me if I didn’t think he had been a sailor.”



Mrs. Dow found it impossible to parry this question as she had done before. Eliza could see that she was disposed to resent the doctor's dwelling on this subject, as prompted by unwarrantable curiosity. Yet this perception did not deter the girl from speaking out eagerly. She was well acquainted with Dr. and Mrs. Fordyce, and was disposed to second any efforts to probe this mystery that she found so depressing to encounter.

"He has been a sailor; he told me he came from New Bedford," she cried.

Mrs. Dow turned and fixed her eyes on her young cousin with them narrowed to a searching line. Eliza knew that they expressed a veiled hostility.

"Most of our Suffolk County men have been sailors; I don't see anything singular in that," said she. "Eliza has had a prejudice against the man ever since he came. She's not exactly an impartial judge."

"Yes, we thought he must have been a sailor at some time in his life. But, as you say, that is not unusual. It occurred to me that he was pruning rather early," went on the gentleman, still enjoying his grapes and his wine in such a pleasant, epicurean way as seemed thoroughly to panoply him against any clairvoyance of the somewhat combustible nature of the forces with which he was dealing. "I generally think not much pruning should be done until later. We had a little talk together, and I didn't know but that he might regard it that I was interfering. I thought I'd ask if he was acting under orders before I got my foot into it any further."

To Eliza's relief, Mrs. Fordyce here furnished a diversion. "John Fordyce, I'm just as nervous

as I can be about that plate," exclaimed she, much exercised for the fate of the delicate piece of china her husband was holding upon his knee in such apparent oblivion of it as he talked. "I expect to see you bring it to everlasting ruin. And it's some of Miss Jakway's beautiful painting, and if you were to destroy it it would be outside of the range of possibility for you to replace it! You never could!"

John, thus reprimanded, gave a small whistle as he realized the peril from which he had been snatched, and submissively put the article in a position of safety. His wife began to descant upon the beauty of the fruit plates.

"Aren't they handsome, John? Oh, I wish I dared attempt anything of the kind! But I'm afraid I should never finish them," sighed she, with humorous candor.

"That shows some self-knowledge, at least," said the doctor, who was always rallying his wife upon her dilatory habits. "But I wonder you don't dare attempt it. You generally dare attempt most anything!" The wink of the doctor's eye was full of expression. "'Beginnings are cheerful,' you know!"

"That's because I'm too ideal," laughed she, "nothing I ever do satisfies me. Don't you know completed things never have the wonderful suggestiveness of incomplete ones? Why is it all the finest things in art are fragments? Would they keep the same place if they were whole, I wonder? What arms would ever seem adequate to the Venus of Milo, for instance; or what head could satisfy us for the flying Nike? I never attempted but one plaque. It stayed around in all this glory of suggestiveness, this beauty of incompleteness,



and from time to time I'd get out my colors and give it a touch or so; until finally John knocked it off the mantle-piece with his elbow. I told him he'd succeeded in finishing it if I hadn't."

Nathaniel had hardly spoken since they entered. Eliza did not look at him, but she knew that by no chance did he glance toward herself. He was deeply incensed, bravely as he carried it off; and so well did he act his part of indifference as he sat stroking a large cat that had mounted upon the cushioned arm of his chair that she was almost chagrined by the bright interest of his look, and his complete ignoring of herself.

Mrs. Fordyce's last remark appeared to particularly amuse him. Indeed, most people found her a piquant little body, in whose presence the ice of stiffness insensibly melted away. She fully understood this to be her *metier* and liked to contribute to the impression as much as possible.

"You don't think that the 'end crowns the work,' then?" remarked he, with a smile. "There's a great deal of satisfaction in seeing things accomplished. At least, I suppose that depends upon temperament. There is to me. Yet there's something, too, in having an object before us. I suppose we must all expect to have our lives rather fragmentary—to outlive more unfulfilled hopes than we ever see fulfilled ones."

"There is a good deal of truth in that," said the physician, assenting with an emphatic nod, apparently without stopping to reflect upon the phenomenon of so young a man as Nathaniel having so hopeless a philosophy. "You know how apt old people are to die as soon as they feel that they have nothing else to do—that their part in life is accomplished? We can't fold our hands. If the fruit is ripe, it will drop off."

“Yes: like old Tom Conklin, who was always in litigation. You remember him?” said Nathaniel. “He had about a dozen law suits, and lived at feud with half the town. At last the suits were all decided in his favor, and he scarcely went out of the house afterwards. Fighting kept him alive, people said.”

“Well, that poor young Snow, who went crazy as soon as they cleared up his reputation and proved him honest, is very much such a case,” the doctor added. “Did you hear that he had been removed to the asylum?”

Eliza and Mrs. Fordyce had been chatting apart meantime, and Mrs. Dow had been sitting quiet, with a brooding look sometimes seen when she was deep in thought. She now roused herself to speak quite in her usual composed manner, her clear tones sounding distinct and measured.

“How is that, Dr. Fordyce? I hadn’t heard that they had been obliged to resort to confinement, though I knew that he had acted a little oddly at times. How sad that is! How do you explain it, doctor? Did you ever know him to show signs of insanity?”

“Not at all. I used to see him constantly. Rather a fine grained fellow—quite so!—sensitive, proud. I had a great sympathy for him. He used to come over and talk to me, and I found him excellent company. Used to seem so philosophical, never got excited in speaking of his troubles, or of the injustice done him. But I think he was such an honest man, and felt the mortification so keenly that the strain just wore him out—made all the fine chords a discord: ‘like sweet bells jangled and out of tune,’ as you know the poet says.”



“Strange,” said she, musingly, as if much struck by the whole subject; but the talk soon changed to other things and she was soon again drawn into it. When the clarion note of politics was sounded she manifested more of her characteristic positiveness and sparkle; and the Fordyces finally left without having observed that their entertainers were any less social and united in spirit than appeared on the surface. From their point of view the evening had been agreeable. Mrs. Dow was a fine woman, though never quite even in manner; always liable to suggestion of storm. But Nathaniel was just right; there were few finer fellows than he; and Eliza came in for her full share of commendation. The doctor remarked to his wife that he had never before seen her appear to so good advantage. And more than that, he said, as she sat there in the firelight he thought most people would have agreed with him that she was as lovely as any Greuze.

“Pshaw! I never saw any Greuze that was half as pretty as she is,” said Mrs. F., who had her own ideas about art.

The subject of this opinion had been relieved to have them go, for there seemed to her to be something electrical in the atmosphere this evening, indoors as well as out. Her cousin's face had an intensity a little peculiar—or so she imagined it—while Nathaniel's averted eyes and cold avoidance, especially when, upon their rising while the guests were going, he pointedly eschewed her vicinity as if her very proximity were obnoxious—this affected her as so unlike his usual consideration that it was all she could do to keep up under the wretchedness it caused. Yet pride

nerved her to seem unconscious of it and to appear even livelier than usual. As soon as the visitors had taken their departure the group remaining had dissolved as if by common consent. Nathaniel made some excuse for retiring early, and rose to bid them good night.

"I shall be off early tomorrow, Aunt Florence," he said. "Don't get up to see me off. Myra can give me a cup of coffee, and I can get my breakfast in the city."

"But we shall see you down again tomorrow night, Nat?" Mrs. Dow urged, as he turned to leave the room.

"I think not," he returned, somewhat awkwardly. "I shall have considerable to do. No, you needn't expect me."

"But when will you come? You know I would like to go on with that matter," said she, with such an evident feeling of helplessness and dismay that he stopped and looked at her, flushing slightly, and his decision changed at once, in self-reproach at his own forgetfulness.

"Surely, surely," he reminded himself, with a little laugh and toss of the head at his own mistake. "Why, of course, how could I have forgotten that? Yes, assuredly I'll come."

"But not if it's not convenient," said she, checking her anxiety with that almost pathetic waiving of her own claims occasionally seen in her now, and that was so unlike the half despotic rule she had once swayed, "don't let me interfere with any of your own plans, if they are important. There is, you know, no absolute hurry about that. It is just a fancy of mine that I would rather have it done. I am glad," added she, "if clients come in so well that you don't have much spare



time on your hands. Sitting and waiting for clients that do not materialize is the weary part usually for young lawyers. But then, waiting is always weary work."

"Yes, I will come without doubt," Nat said, again. "My business will keep as well as yours will." He had shaken hands with each of his aunts already, and now offered his hand to Eliza. He could feel the small fingers tremble in his own as he took them, giving them a slight pressure as he did so—a slight thing in itself, but inasmuch as it breathed forgiveness and amity it went straight to the girl's sore and contrite heart. He returned to the door of the library a few moments later in a mackintosh and hat drawn over his face to explain to his aunt that he should not turn in immediately, but would not be gone long; she must not lock him out.

Eliza stood and looked out of the window of her room, thinking that it was all over now if it had not been before; she had forfeited forever even his friendly liking and regard. How is it we know our joys at full value only when we have lost them? And yet what heart awakened regrets the knowledge of itself bought at ever so high a price? "You must be a discoverer to have discovered that I have depths," she had once said to him. He had given her a knowledge of the depths and possibilities of her own nature; those clear, glowing eyes had, as it were, warmed the statue to life. And she—how dared she, what was she, indeed, that she should requite kindness in that way? She was glad for the cold rudeness of which he had been guilty, and that she, in her turn, had something to forgive now. The burden of unkindness did not rest quite so heavily upon herself.

If it had not been for her cousin Florence, whose tactlessness had put her in such a false light, she would never have been so little of a lady. "He must know I am of common blood," she said to herself, in her mortified self-communings. "How could I be expected to have perfect manners? I must always love him," she thought, with a certain satisfaction in contemplating her own undying pain and devotion that might not have been hers had she been quite hopeless. Whatever the barrier set between them she should always consider him her ideal: she thought in the words of Guinevere, "we needs must love the highest when we see it." She loved this highest, the more absolutely that it was no cold abstraction, but warm with human imperfections and endearing human impulses.

But these thoughts did not keep her awake. Sleep came to her as easily as it does when our state is one of deep dejection, and we only wish to escape thought and the misery of feeling. Physical nature was too well prepared by the long walk in the wind not to overcome even the excitement brought by the incidents of the evening.



## X

Nathaniel had lighted a cigar and gone out for his walk up the beach, carrying with him a new sense of the capriciousness and entire unaccountableness of all feminine nature. Yet the events of the evening had taught him the strength of his own feeling as nothing before had ever done.

It had stopped raining, but the wind was still high, and the surf showed in a white spray at times dashing high among the rocks. A full moon shone out in momentary glimpses between the scudding, wind-driven clouds. Nathaniel paced back and forth in the night, finding his peace of mind more seriously disturbed than it had ever been before, as he tried to solve the mystery of Eliza's rudeness. He felt that the words had not been carelessly spoken, that they did not show mere caprice, but rather they had given him the impression of having been uttered with the intention, if not of wounding him, at least of repelling him and his interest. It seemed to him that she had done this intentionally, and that she must have heard something against him, something that had furnished her an excuse in her own mind for such action. What could it have been? That was the mystery. Could Aunt Florence and her tactless proposals have been at the bottom of it? But no, Nathaniel was loath to think that Aunt Florence could be in any way treacherous to himself. He could not believe that possible.

The moon at this instant came out of the clouds and shone out resplendently. Nathaniel's atten-

tion was diverted from his own preoccupied thoughts to the conditions around him. For the first time he noticed the gleam of a sail as a boat stood in toward the shore. He watched its movements with startled interest. He had a distinct view of it for a moment, with its sail closely reefed, before the moon was again rapidly eclipsed under a dark cloud. But the outline remained visible against the sky, and he could see that it was almost directly upon a great boulder known as the "elephant" from its form when its huge, barnacled sides were revealed at low tide. There was always a strong undertow around the big rock, and it was only in a placid sea that a small boat could venture too near it without danger. He formed a trumpet with his hands and shouted an excited warning.

"Keep off! There's no good landing in here. You're almost on those rocks!"

For answer a faint response came to him above the noise of the wind and tide. Then, as an unusually high wave came rolling in he saw the boat careen, and with the backward surge of the wave she seemed to be swept helplessly upon the rock. Then he heard nothing.

Nathaniel remembered that an old dory was generally to be found not far from where he was, beached among the stones and tangled seaweeds. The search for this consumed a dreadful length of time, as it seemed to him, as he rushed up and down, fretting at the delay; but at last it was found and dragged to the water's edge. Casting hat and coat aside, he ran his craft down into the frothing waves, sprang in and rowed rapidly in the direction from which he had seen the boat go down.



It took only a few strokes to bring him within sight of the overturned boat, to which a man was still desperately clinging. The sky was bright enough as Nathaniel reached him for him to recognize the features of the man he had come to rescue as those of Martin, the strange gardener at the Dow house. The man was evidently in a state of great exhaustion from the long strain, and as with weak voice and teeth that chattered too much to make his speech clear, he tried to say something Nathaniel could only gather that his arm had been hit by the boom as he had been swept overboard, and that he could not use it. By an effort of strength that required all his own energies and skill the young man got him into his boat and then turned to row ashore. But now they seemed to have drifted out on a wide waste of waters, and he was utterly unable to locate the comparatively open stretch of beach from which he had started out. Several times he let his small boat rise on the crest of a wave, only to drift out again uncertainly as he divined that there were rocks ahead, and that the fate of the other boat would be only that of his own little craft. Almost spent with his exertions, he was beginning to lose courage, and to be swept aimlessly out toward the open sea, when a bright ray of light cast a sudden pathway over the water. Encouraged by this he pulled a few strong strokes toward the shore and found to his joy that they were in line with the open haven. A last effort of strength, a skillful avoidance of the rocky perils upon either hand, and an incoming wave landed them through the surf upon the sandy little strand.

Once safely upon the shore he turned his attention to his helpless charge, who had slipped to the

bottom of the boat in a limp, nerveless heap. He was working over him when he became aware that a light was coming closer along the beach. As it shone full into his face he sprang to his feet, with an exclamation of astonishment.

Eliza Jakway stood there by him. She had been awakened from her first sleep by that shout. It had seemed to her that she recognized Nathaniel's voice, and the remembrance that she had not known of his return to the house made her start up in instant response to what she feared might be his need. She was not timid in the sense in which a city girl might have been, and after hastily throwing on her clothing, did not stop to think of rousing any one to go with her; but, before leaving the room a sudden thought prompted her to set the lamp in the window toward the sea. It was the bright beams of that lamp that had streamed out over the waves, showing Nathaniel a safe way to the shore. Then Eliza hurried down to the woodshed, and having lighted a lantern that was kept there, had let herself quietly out by a back door, and started for the beach.

When she came upon Nathaniel and his unconscious companion, she asked no questions, seeming to divine instinctively how it had all happened. Was it not Martin, whom Eliza had always declared had something tragical and sinister about him? No singular occurrence in which Martin had a part could really surprise Eliza. Instead of speaking, she lent her aid with a swift comprehension of what was required, helping Nathaniel to chafe his hands until a first faint sign of life rewarded their efforts.

Then for the first time she directly addressed Nathaniel.



“Shall I go to the house for restoratives? Brandy or something?” she said. “Or shan’t I bring Dr. Fordyce? It won’t take me but a few moments.”

Nathaniel assented, and she flew away on her errand, going to Dr. Fordyce first, and fortunately finding him still up in his study, for it was not yet very late. On her way back she stopped to arouse Mrs. Dow, in order to have warm blankets made ready, as the doctor had advised. Mrs. Dow awoke to the emergency at once, and she and one of the maids started a fire, and were getting things in a state of readiness when the doctor and the other two, with Martin walking slowly between the doctor and Nathaniel, returned to the house.

Mrs. Dow was standing at the door as they came up the walk, the light from inside outlining her figure. She had thrown on a warm red wrapper with black trimmings, and the rich color framed becomingly her noble dark head. Martin would have slunk away when he saw her, expecting to go around to his usual quarters, but she would not allow it.

“Bring him in here, Nathaniel,” she said. “There is a spare room ready for him. He ought not to go to his room tonight. He may not be strong—he may need care in the night.”

Hanging his head, he entered, though very unwillingly. The doctor followed him in and attended to his arm, as he had not been able to do so far, but after that was over, though meat and bread had been set out and he was pressed to take something, the man could not be brought to accept anything. He appeared to be still very weak, and Nathaniel helped him up to his room.

"Did he tell you why he tried to do it?" Florence Dow asked her nephew as he descended the stairs again.

Nathaniel could not tell her much; he had had but little talk with Martin.

"I have no idea that it was intentional. It is possible he may have been drinking, though. He told me he had gone over to Crow's Head in the early part of the day, and that he started home this afternoon before the storm set in. He was making for Sprague's Landing when the wind drove him on these rocks. I think he'll be all right in the morning. His arm was a little bruised; that was the worst thing, but the doctor attended to that."

"Strange," she murmured. There was a brilliant color on her cheek, and the light of excitement in her dark eyes. She had her enemy at a disadvantage; he could never refuse her now!

"Well, Nat, I shudder to think what it would have been for us all to have lost you! We all owe devout thanksgiving for that!" she said, warmly. "You've done a good night's work. That poor man was not ready to go to his last account, yet. It was a mercy that he was spared. Well, let's all to bed. This has been an exciting episode. I am sure you will want to rest."

Nathaniel had not had a chance to speak to Eliza until now.

"The Lord must have inspired you to put that lamp in the window, Eliza," he said, as he took her hand. "I had lost all idea of direction, and was being swept around at the mercy of the waves. I was fast losing courage, when it shone upon me. I have found now, where my beacon light shines."

Eliza did not answer. Her moist and shining



eyes seemed to express that she was in accord with the joy of the occasion, but Nathaniel was disappointed that she said no more. Instead of that, she slipped away shyly, her sense of his heroic act making her feel herself at a greater distance from him than before, while her own deficiencies were still so fresh in her mind. So she said good night and went quietly upstairs; but she slept like a tired child those few remaining hours until morning.

Jarvis Marshall woke early to look around him at the pleasant, spacious room, where the sunshine came in and lighted up the refined accessories to his unaccustomed sight. The room had once been richly furnished, and the old black walnut furniture still had an air of good tone. The blue and white hangings were fresh, there was a big chintz couch, in the window a comfortable reclining chair. The man lay and looked around him with a new sense of his homeless and outcast condition in the world. It was a strange turn in the wheel of fate that he should be there, under the roof of Dow House. His enemy was heaping coals of fire upon his head. He lay there thinking for some time, his own ill-spent life rising up before him as it never had until now.

What a wasted life it had been! And yet, whose fault had it been but his own? He had tried often to lay his shortcomings at another's door, but he knew now that he alone had been to blame. He could not make himself believe that he had been more sinned against than sinning. It had been cowardice, as well as, perhaps, some thought of revenge, that had carried him away to India when Florence Dow had been depending upon him to clear her from the terrible charge against her

that had threatened her very life. It was true that he should have put himself in peril of the same charge if he had remained, but it was none the less abject cowardice to have gone. And it had been a still greater cowardice that had kept him in hiding all these long years, not daring to claim the comparative comfort and respectability which might have been his if he had only appeared to accept them. The servants were astir below, preparing Nathaniel's early breakfast; and he heard the wheels of the carriage sent to take the young man to his train some time later. His own resolution was suddenly taken. He felt that he could not remain here, under his enemy's roof. A stronger access of the same moral cowardice that had been so influential in shaping his life made that seem the imminent danger to be avoided, and he started up and in spite of the impediment of his disabled arm, managed to dress himself hastily. Then he slipped quietly away, without being heard. When Mrs. Dow sent up to his room to inquire how he was, the bird had flown.

Some hours later, Mr. Suydam the elder, universally acknowledged as the lawyer of highest standing in Setauket, was just concluding a long interview with one of his clients. He had given most of the morning to the man, and had been drawing up some papers for him, among them a last will and testament disposing of the small, but enhancing property, of which the man was possessed. The man had told him that he was thinking of going on another voyage; he was restless, he said. Mr. Suydam was too keen an observer of men and things not to understand something of the origin of this restlessness. But that was not his affair, after all. He had promised not to betray his eccentric client's confidence.



There was another point, however, upon which his judgment differed. In this he had the interests of his client at heart.

"But, my good man, the case has been tried, and the world is quite satisfied with the result," he remonstrated. "Why should you wish to open it up?"

The man answered him with a downcast, sheepish air. Though far from deficient in natural advantages, he had a shambling, ill-favored look, as if wanting in self-respect.

"She would have it so. It troubles her. You see, women are fanciful. I want to satisfy her. It's a notion, of course."

"A notion, certainly. I can't see that you serve any good purpose by doing so. It's against my advice, I tell you frankly. But if it's a whim—a whim of yours as well as hers—as it is apparently—a salve to your own conscience—"

"Yes, yes!—that's it—I can die better content."

"But you don't intend to die for these many years yet, my man! I hope so—a man as well fixed as you are now! You may marry and be happy yet. You had a close call yesterday, I know. You're morbid about it. It won't happen again. My advice to you is, acknowledge your identity, and take possession of what you have—give up this masquerading!"

"Yes, that's so—I'll acknowledge my identity. Perhaps that is the best. But to have all this fixed will make my mind easy in case anything should happen, you know!—in case anything should happen. Now you'll be sure and publish that deposition in tomorrow's paper, Squire?"

"Yes, and I don't think there's much danger of prosecution. You see an indictment can't be

found against a man for a felony after five years in this state, and it's over twenty in your case. I'm confident of my power to defend you in such an event, but I think you're perfectly safe."

"Well, you see to that deposition, Squire?"

"I'll have it attended to—don't fear!" the squire assured him, and they parted. Eliza Jakeway, who was driving through the town square, saw Mr. Suydam and received one of his courtly bows, but she did not notice the shambling figure of the man he was showing out of his office.

Jarvis Marshall had other errands that morning, while the exquisite autumn sunshine was lighting up the world all about him, and the townsfolk were going about their accustomed walks of peace and quietness, of eager hopes and fears, of petty, every-day interests. No one noticed the gardener from Dow House, always rather an eccentric figure, as he pursued his way, turning into one of the tortuous little lanes, which, as in all seaport towns, led down among the docks and wharves. The little port was a place of such modest dimensions that you could step at once from the decorous, grass-grown residence portions of the town, where the white churches looked down at you from every intersection of streets, to the borders of the open bay, the near neighborhood of which was attested at most times by the persistent company of a compound of ancient, nautical smells manifestly out of place in so respectable an atmosphere, and not to be accounted for until you raised your eyes and saw the row of tall masts in sight above the big trees that shut you in. Marshall's walk was a short one, therefore, from the lawyer's office to the little building on the dock from which he had hired the boat in which he had met with disaster. He came to tell



of its loss and to square his account with its owner; but it had been already reported that the dory was apparently but little injured, and had gone ashore on Roaring Bull, a small island that was little more than a reef, which was just off the coast near Harrison's Point. His mind relieved on this score, Jarvis Marshall paid a liberal sum to cover all costs of salvage, and then, after a little more chat, and being condoled with on the injury to his arm, which he carried in a sling, he left the boatman.

He started on his way through the South Woods. He felt very weak and feeble, and lurched in his gait. He heard wheels coming, and drew back into the shadow of the trees. A carriage went by filled with smiling children. They were calling to each other, and pointed out a red squirrel that went scampering across the road and up the trunk of a maple tree. Marshall lay down in a retired spot, but through the branches of the trees he could still see a small piece of the road. He lay there some time. He saw Eliza Jakway driving home from the village in the trap. She sat up straight on her seat, the clear color of health on her cheek, her dark eyebrows drawn a little as her thoughtful gaze was directed ahead, as if seeing something in the future. She looked young and happy, and never before had he seen the strong resemblance to another that smote him now. It was as if that other's bright, courageous, happy self had appeared to him out of the dim outlines of the past. He watched her with lingering, fascinated gaze. Then he buried his face in his uninjured arm. She was gone when he lifted it again; the horse's hoofs no longer sounded on the still air. "It is time to take my powder," he said.

## XI

Aunt Margaret had slept through the event of last night. Though highly indignant at first, that she had not been informed of such an exciting episode, she now had the advantage of hearing it all. She listened with the most intense interest, and Eliza was made to go over and over again her part in the affair for her entertainment. The young girl showed unusual sweetness and good nature in humoring Aunt Margaret in this respect.

“And so you can’t find Martin this morning? That’s odd! but, no doubt, he’s out somewhere about his work. I wonder if he can use his arm. It looks as if he must be all right after his ducking. It was a fortunate escape for him, poor man!”

“Yes, I think so; but I would like to know where he is,” said Mrs. Dow, with evident uneasiness. “I’ve asked Tom to look him up, but he hasn’t brought me any word yet.” Tom was the young negro who drove for Mrs. Dow, and took care of the one sorrel horse. “I thought his arm was quite helpless; I didn’t suppose he could do any work, for the present. I expect Dr. Fordyce over soon to see him. I wonder why I haven’t seen anything of father for the last five days. I’m afraid he isn’t well. He was talking of a fishing excursion, and possibly he went. I miss him so when I do not see him. I wanted particularly to ask his advice this morning. Eliza, I believe I’ll have you drive over and see how he is. Tell him I want particularly to see him.”



Dr. Fordyce came in a little later, but finding his patient gone, he sat down for a few moments' chat about the events of the previous evening. Eliza did not happen to be in the room, and as they were quite alone the time was favorable not only for her to take the doctor into her confidence, but also to consult him as to the state of her health. She confessed to a little heart trouble which was giving her some cause of anxiety; the doctor appeared to think it merely a sympathetic symptom, but prepared her some powders, saying that he would come in frequently to see her until he had studied her case; meanwhile, he warned her to guard herself against any special excitement. They parted after a long, friendly colloquy. Dr. Fordyce felt that he had never really known Mrs. Dow. He promised to come in again the next morning.

Her cousin had some errands that she wished Eliza to do in the town, and the girl drove off in a light trap behind old Bingo, intending to do the marketing and bring back the morning mail. The old sorrel was a sorry contrast to the fine steeds that had years before pranced down the broad gravel sweep to the road, but he was a good traveler, and jogged along at a steady gait. It was a fair day, and warmer than would have been thought possible the night before. The pastures had grown light and bright as the foliage deepened, and seen through the dark trees as she drove along they were full of quiet toned, sombre beauty. The charm of the landscape brought to Eliza that grateful intrusion of the outside world that rouses us from selfish brooding with a voice of mingled rebuke and comfort.

The old part of the village, where the Dows still lived, and where theirs and the Sprague mansion had been built, was on a long, low point of land. They had stood among country fields then, and though much more built up now, the natural growth of the town had left it a mile distant from the business center. The little port seemed half asleep, as it always did, and Eliza's errands that morning were varied by the usual trivial incidents. In consequence of the postmaster's having come out and locked up the office while he went across the street to wait on a customer he had just beheld enter his shoe shop over the way, there was some detention in getting the mail. On being informed of his whereabouts by several interested and obliging lookers-on, Eliza went after him, as she had often done before. Whatever she did there were plenty of people looking on, village style, most of them familiar faces from girlhood, while she had known all the children since they could toddle. The photographer, in the door of his small shop where clocks were ticking and jewelry was hanging in the windows—callings never before known to affiliate, often found themselves here brought into the oddest of unions, and represented in one individual—rolled his black eyes at her in a more odious way than common with him; and it was only because she obstinately pretended not to see him that he did not offer to tie her horse.

She was performing this little service for herself, and performing it with some fear and trembling, for Eliza was not a born horsewoman, when Mr. Suydam, the young lawyer, came to her relief, stopping for a moment's exchange of talk and polite inquiries for Mrs. Dow and the rest. Eliza



did not have many of these little social encounters; but she cherished as high an opinion of Mr. Philip Suydam as of any young man in Setauket, and was aware that their meetings always left a pleasant impression, and were so frequent as to excite a suspicion, even in her own unconscious mind, that they were not entirely fortuitous. This preoccupation partly explained why it was that, when at the same time she returned the courtly salutation of Mr. Suydam, the elder, as he was showing out of his office a shabby client, a rough man with his arm in a sling, she should have quite failed to recognize the familiar figure of their own gardener. She did not forget her errand to Uncle Petrarch, and went there next, intending to reserve to the last the reward of a chance to look in upon her own home circle. Captain Jakway, being the oldest of several brothers, still occupied the old Jakway place. It was a comfortable old domicile of unpainted wood, placed gable end to the street, and with a deep garden in the rear, shut in by high board fences. Eliza found her uncle out there now, sunning himself on a wooden settle; he had been suffering from rheumatism, and was under strict orders to be out only when the sun shone. His house was kept, and well kept, for him by the wife of one of his nephews, a little, decided body, who was both kind and truly fond of the old man. Eliza's cousin Chet, as he was called, was a young surveyor who had lifted himself up to a good position, and was a general favorite in the community. Mrs. Chester Jakway had been a Sprague.

Though this part of Suffolk had been mainly populated by the same settlers as those peopling the neighborhood coast, there were several of

these old Dutch families that would appear to have migrated from King's or Queen's county, forming the nucleus of the village. It was commonly said in the vicinity that all who were not Douws were Suydams and the rest were Jakways. This neighborly sarcasm, however, was an injustice to a fourth excellent family by the name of Sprague originally Spraag—due probably to their downfall in the world. It was well known that the Spragues, many of whom had gone westward, had more than regained any lost prestige in those new fields; but in the respect that I understand to be called into question by the aforesaid little current *bon mot*, they had done their duty to the town, having proved as prolific a branch as any of the rest. Livy Sprague had lived up to the family reputation, and already had a numerous flock; some of the tow-headed younger specimens of which were now playing around their indulgent grand uncle, in the garden.

“Why, uncle, where did you get your rheumatism?” Eliza accosted him, as she saw that he was really rendered partly helpless by his affliction.

“I’m glad you’ve come to scold uncle, Lizzie,” the decided little Mrs. Chet said. “I haven’t left him any peace for doing such a foolish thing, and at his age, too! And I think Chet’s just as much to blame as he is, ’cause he ought to have known better. Think of his going off into the swamps fishing, during this wet spell, and at his age, too.”

“Well, well, you women do exaggerate things most foolishly,” exclaimed the Captain. “There’s no use o’ goin’ on so about it. Man of my age must expect a little rhumatiz now and then. I’m sure I do. You see, Chet had to go on a surveyin’ expedition, and I thought I’d go with



him, and we'd just make a little pleasin' trip of it—go up to the ponds in Hempstead. And so we would, only we got caught in this bad spell of weather, and it twan't no fun, I tell ye! We didn't have no luck, either, 'less you consider it lucky to be left alive, the skeeters were so all-fired thick. We wouldn't a' had enough to eat if it hadn't been for the frogs. We got along pretty well with frogs' legs. Chet'd take a twenty-two rifle and shoot a whole mess of 'em. I could eat some white potatoes and a lot o' frogs' legs right now if I had 'em." Captain Jakway's reminiscent air made Eliza smile. She gave him her cousin's message.

"She'll hev to come down here if she wants to see me," he said. "Olivy, there, she won't let me go out."

Olivia resented this as a manifest injustice.

"It's the doctor, Uncle Petrarch, you know," she cried. "You ought not to put it all onto me, even if you don't like it. I jest mean that doctor's orders shall be carried out."

"Oh, yes, Livy, I know; you women do most ginally take the responsibilities of the universe right on your shoulders; and the smaller you be, not much bigger than a pint of cider, just like you, the more responsible you be. So you see how it is, Lizzie, I can't come. Flo'll have to come down and see me. Yes, it's been a precious damp season and awful bad for rheumatics. It's that comet, I guess. I'm disappointed we can't have another clam bake; we counted on having one more; there's a Rhode Island man here who was goin' to get us up one. Touch a Rhode Island man on the subject—he don't think there's anybody else can equal them there! I'm sorry we can't have it

come off, but I'm afraid it's too late now. He's haulin' mealers over here, for a livin', up to Miss Sticketts's. Well, Elizy, you tell Florence she'll hev to come and see me, this time. I ain't 'lowed to go out."

Eliza promised, and started to go, feeling really troubled to see how Uncle Petrarch's good spirits were ruffled by the double misfortune of his twinges and the enforcement of the physician's orders, which he had never before in his life put himself out to accept literally. He woke up at the last moment to the sense that she was escaping him.

"Hello! How are you and that young spark getting along?" he cried. Eliza did not answer; she considered the question intrusive, but she laughed as she got in and drove off.

It was necessary for her to go home, for she seldom came into the village without doing that; and she was detained for some time by her mother and sisters. They had heard of the accident and rescue, and knew that the boat had been picked up on an island off the shore. Eliza drove back slowly through the South Woods, Bingo falling into a walk, in the freedom allowed him by his driver's abstracted mood.

It was while she was away that a tall, fine-looking young man turned in at the gate of Dow House. He ran lightly up the steps, and without waiting for the ceremony of pulling the bell, entered the front hall door, of which the screen was closed. Here he hesitated, and standing in the hall a moment looked about him with a pair of quick, intelligent dark eyes. What thoughts and memories crowded in upon his mind, who can say? for the objects were familiar ones from childhood,



and the fine vistas at either hand into spacious, darkened apartments presented as he looked constant landmarks of old association. What he might have done next is impossible to tell, for at this juncture Mary, an old housemaid who had been long in the family, entering from the dining-room, came upon him there, and recognized him at once.

"Oh, Mr. Frank, is it you?" she cried. "How long it is since I have seen you!" And then she remembered that that name was one hardly to be uttered above one's breath in the house, and hesitated in the joyful welcome she was according him.

"Where is mother? Is she upstairs? May I go up to her?" asked Mr. Frank, rather peremptorily. He looked very handsome, and there was a certain triumph and excitement about him that did not escape Mary's observation.

"The mistress is up in her room. Sure, I suppose you may go up to her, Mr. Frank. But, perhaps, I had better run up and see," said she, cautiously, wishing to spare Mrs. Dow the shock of too great a surprise.

The young man flashed a glance at her; then said with quick pride, "Oh, no, I'll just go up, if you say that she is there. Surely there can be no reason why she won't see me."

"It's only on account of the shock, Mr. Frank," said she, with more decision. "You see, it's very unexpected, and the mistress hasn't been very well." Then he stopped and looked at her, some anxiety gradually subduing the victorious pre-occupation of his mien.

"She hasn't been well, you say? Well, I'll take care I don't startle her. I think she has been ex-

pecting me," and he went up rather slowly and tapped at his mother's door. Mary, who added to the curiosity of her class a real sympathy and affection for her mistress, listened for a few moments. She heard Mrs. Dow's cry of joy and astonishment; then the closed door revealed no more. It seemed that this breach in the family that had been so sad a subject of talk, and that had made her mistress so unhappy, was about to be healed at last. Mary had the interest of the family too much at heart not to rejoice at this, and also was duly impressed by the fact that the event was an important one. As she alone was in possession of the knowledge of it, it was not strange that the next step with her was to distribute the information impartially among the servants. Gossip, as it appears, is a means of increasing one's importance. If we alone have power to communicate any piece of intelligence, we become temporarily the owner of it. This being the case, it is certainly self-denying to withhold it, and it will seem no wonder that it is a virtue seldom practiced.

In the large room where mother and son were sitting in the serene morning light, they were now engaged in animated talk. It was a proud day for the young man, who had seen his western schemes ripen so far toward success that he now felt that he could make restitution to the Dow estate of all of which he had once availed himself of the use. It was this that he was now about to do.

"But can you spare this, Frank? Won't it cripple you in your business? What resources have you besides?" asked she, looking flushed and troubled as he laid the cheque before her, and insisted upon her going over interest and princi-



pal carefully with him. It was hard to accept it from his hand, and she began to falter a little now that this wrong upon which she had laid such stress was about to be redressed.

"It might be if it were not conscience money," said he, quickly, "but I see my way of doing it now, and I don't want to put it off. I want to clear away this cloud that has come between us. Oh, yes, mother, you shall have your pound of flesh," smiling in a way to soften the ungenerous words, and yet not sparing the look of hesitation in his mother's face.

"My son—my dear son, do you feel that way?" she said, though she smiled, too, in the bright, magnetic way so like his own. "But, Frank, it is only justice," she said, more firmly. "It is right and best for you in the end that you should make this restitution. I am sorry if you have any hard feeling; but I do not feel as I would if I were to personally profit by it. It is nothing to me, excepting as an abstract obligation for you," but there was a plaintive, appealing cadence in her voice as if she feared he did not fully credit this.

"Well," said he, not veiling his impatience of this plea, "I don't dispute that. I didn't come here to dispute the matter. I know you consider it to be for my good, as a sort of propitiation to some offended power, whatever it may be. But we won't go over that now. Let us put business aside, and think of something else. It is such a misfortune that money ever came between us." It had been by his act that it had done so, but the widow was full of self-reproach and generous apology, strangely weak for her proud and determined spirit, and did not try to defend herself. "Old Mary frightened me by saying you were not very well. You are looking well, mother."

“Do I look well, Frank? And yet I have thought I have had some warnings lately.”

“Warnings? Of what character?” anxiously, with a sudden fear that this mother, who it seemed that he had just regained, and whom he began to feel he had much undervalued, might be snatched from him now before he had an opportunity to answer to his conscience for the neglect of her with which it reproached him. “I hope, mother, nothing will ever come between us again,” cried he, with sudden affection, and he took her in his arms and kissed her as he had done when he came in. At this manifestation of tenderness, his mother’s strong lithe figure, still so trim and shapely in its prime of womanhood, was shaken by several deep sobs, and she shed tears a moment on his shoulder, attesting how hard it had been to deny the promptings of her heart all these weary months. She looked at him now with eyes of clinging love. He was her own son still, in spite of their differences and there was inexpressible comfort in seeing him again. There was much to tell him of what had taken place since they were last together, especially of the excitement and perplexity that had been caused her by the discovery that Jarvis Marshall, her quandom lover and enemy, was in her service in the disguise of a gardener.

“What in the world ever induced the fellow to come back here?” exclaimed Frank, much disgusted.

“He says he came for my forgiveness. He has that readily enough. As if it mattered at this late day! But somehow the discovery, and his constant presence have helped to keep me reminded of the past, and I have been less happy



than usual. There has been no one I could talk to about it—Eliza has seemed more occupied with her own affairs than usual, more self-absorbed; and besides, I forbore to disturb her unnecessarily, she is so impressionable and imaginative. And I have been miserable in health. I have had several faint spells lately that frightened me. But, Frank, there is one thing I wanted to speak to you about. I thought I might make this coming of his a benefit in one way. Would it not be possible for me to have him draw me up a statement of that whole occurrence—you know, when your father died”—Mrs. Dow looked down, she was deeply agitated. “You know he was the only eye witness, except that old man,” continued she, with a visible effort. “He could give me a sworn statement of the facts and I could publish them,” she paused, and looked up beseechingly, struggling under a miserable shame as she did so. But Frank, who had turned red, frowned the whole thing down in his determined way.

“No, Mother, it has all been forgotten. It does not affect us now”; shrinking, with the natural feeling of a proud man, from having this old sore again opened. “I think you err in judgment in opening up these old questions.”

“Yes, you say just as he does! How can you know, either of you?” cried she, in a flash of passionate despair. “It is easy for others to judge. I have borne it, but it has seemed at times as if I should sink under it. I have chafed under it so that it seems as if I could die content if I felt that my reputation was clear, that no one could speak ill of me. And I think of it for you, Frank, to remove this blot, this disgrace absolutely from your mother’s name. It is right that old sores

should be opened up, so that they may be healed. I advised with Nathaniel about it. He did not advise against it," said she, still almost imploringly.

"Mother, you are morbid about it," said Frank. "Do forget it! No one believes that now. And besides, I don't think his deposition would carry the weight you expect. Those who have doubted once will be at liberty to doubt still. It will be trying to you—terribly trying and for what object? No, my darling mother, put it out of your mind. See that you are not imaginative, and do try to be happy." He rose, as if to go. How elegant he was! She looked at him more closely as he stood before her, and for the first time noticed the unobtrusive perfection and fit of his clothes. Frank was always well-dressed. "And so Nat has been down here? How is he? I should so like to see the dear old boy! Why doesn't he come around and see me in the city, I wonder? He might often find me there. Now, Mother, you mustn't fancy yourself out of health. Cheer up and let us all be loving and take life for the best. Millie can't come down and see you this evening, for there's to be a—well, an affair over at the house; but she will the first thing in the morning, and I hope you and she will bury the hatchet, for my sake."

"Of course, we will, Frank," said she, earnestly, "and I shall be very glad to see Millie."

"Yes, and I hope you and she may like each other. You've a great many happy years before you yet—a woman with that color!" Frank said. "It seems to me you look as well as you ever did in your life. Why, you are as pretty as a girl, mother mine. It has been a real deprivation not



to have my friends know what a handsome mamma I've got."

"My dear boy, you're getting more and more extravagant in your statements. I take it that's western—that tendency to exaggeration," said the widow, playfully. Indeed, joy had given her a bright color, and her whole look and air were so irradiated and softened by love and contentment that she scarcely seemed the same woman that she had a short time since.

He went away soon, as she could not persuade him to stay to luncheon, though he promised he would bring his wife down early the following day; and he left behind him an invitation for Eliza and Nathaniel to join them in the festivities of the evening. When he had gone, the widow sat where she was, buried in thought, not noticing the lapse of time. This reconciliation had not brought her all the peace, the satisfaction she had anticipated.

"Yes," she mused, "it may be so. It will not do to expect to have our way in all things. Life is fragmentary, at the best, and those who see their plans most thoroughly carried out are not perhaps the most contented. '*L'homme propose*', but he has to learn his feebleness to '*dispose*.' It is all such a labyrinth of doubt when one thinks to take his destiny in his own hands. Perhaps Frank is right in saying, to what object? We cannot undo the past."

So deeply did she become buried in these thoughts that it was not until the sounds and keen odors ascending from below told her that luncheon was nearly ready that she was reminded of the flight of time. She started up with a sigh, and hearing Bingo being driven around to the stable concluded that Eliza must have come in, and went

through to her room, to deliver the invitation for the evening.

Eliza was tired from her drive, and had thrown herself into a big chair. She was looking absently down the garden paths when her attention was aroused by her cousin's entrance. Mrs. Dow's cheeks were still flushed, her eyes showed the excitement which possessed her. Eliza had always felt an enthusiastic admiration for her cousin's beauty, for the firm straight lines of her features, the resolute lips so delicately curled, the fire and openness of the large, beautiful black eyes; but now she saw this fineness of feature softened by the gracious sweetness that joy alone can impart.

"What do you think has happened, Eliza? I don't believe you could guess. Frank has been here. I am reconciled to my dear boy, Eliza. And better than that, he has proved that his principles are sound, that he can and will act up to a high standard. I always maintained Frank had good principles, Eliza. You didn't believe it, you tried to prejudice me, but I always had faith in him. You said several little things, I remember, that gave me doubts of him."

"Oh, did I, Cousin Florence?" said Eliza, penitently. But she had a good memory, and Master Frank's peculiarities had not been forgotten.

"Well, never mind. Straws show which way the wind blows, and I did think for a while my child was lacking in a high sense of honor," said this feminine Brutus. "But it was only boyish fun. Boys won't be tied down to the seriousness of life, always. We must not expect it. But I think he will make just as honorable a man; and he wasn't satisfied until he had paid off his debt to the last jot, the uttermost farthing."



The widow's gaze strayed off to the sunny garden, where a large cat sat washing her face and blinking in the light. It all looked so still and beautiful. She had never lost capacity for the enjoyment of life, but it all appeared to her in new colors, with a freshness of charm. A familiar figure crossed her range of vision. It was Carl, the gardener's assistant, and she was reminded of that other, who was her one incubus. She remembered that she had never told Eliza of the secret of his identity. She told her now, to the girl's intense astonishment. How was it that she had never guessed it herself? It all seemed so clear and natural, that that should be the simple explanation of the mystery that had at one time so oppressed her. The shadowyness of it seemed much less as they talked it over, though she reproached her cousin for not taking her into her confidence earlier, and thus saving her that alienated and bewildered feeling. So engaged were they in talking that Eliza almost forgot to tell about the old Captain's rheumatism, and Mrs. Dow to deliver the invitation that had been entrusted to her.

"I had almost forgotten that Frank left an invitation for you and Nathaniel. Mr. Casgrove has two foreigners staying with him, gentlemen he became acquainted with in Washington when he was in office there. Frank said they intend to give a reception to the Setauket public this evening—at least so I gathered—and he thought you would find it pleasant."

Eliza, to whom the prospect was anything but welcome, presented several objections, but they were not valid ones, and, in this case, her cousin's strength of will prevailed. She had the afternoon

before her to put her muslin gown or her cadet silk in order, whichever she decided to wear. The choice finally fell to the silk; it did not seem quite warm enough for the muslin. So she set herself, with that lack of anticipation that makes exertion an effort, to get ready for the occasion. The widow tried to be as kind and helpful as possible, offering to lend her anything she could, and coming in with her hands full of jewelry boxes, from the contents of which the girl chose but sparingly, feeling tonight an especial distaste to being decked out in borrowed plumage. Mrs. Dow went away that afternoon, driving over to see her father in the rockaway, with Tom driving old Bingo. She, too, drove back through the South Woods. Old Bingo generally went through the South Woods more than once a day, but now he shied at one place in the narrow road—a strange thing for that staid animal to do. Yet no horse is proof against shying, any more than we are proof against foolishness. Did he feel the presence of that silent form, to the nearness of which the rest of the wayfarers were so obtuse? Mrs. Dow was fond of this piece of woods, and today struck by their beauty. They had never seemed more lovely in the depth of summer than now when monitions of its decay were all about.



## XII

Unaware of any social formality in prospect for the evening, Nathaniel took the later train that night, coming in after they had all finished dinner. Being told by his aunt of what was expected of him, he agreed to it willingly enough, and hastened his solitary meal in order to hurry upstairs to his room and get himself in readiness. Nevertheless, he was the first to appear below, and Eliza found him in the drawing room, standing before one of the Dow portraits as she came down the stairs. He was looking pale and worn, as if the long day had been a hard one; and in spite of his fresh toilette, Eliza was struck by the change in his appearance since she had seen him last. Yet he turned around to speak to her so much in his usual manner, that, much as she had dreaded the meeting with him, she was, at once, more at her ease.

"I can see how the Chinese worship their ancestors," he said. "I cannot help a feeling as I stand before old portraits that they are thinking about me, and have a sympathy and interest with what is going on among their descendants. Somehow, as I have been looking tonight at that picture of Miss Malsy, it has seemed to me as if she was excited. She seems to have something important to say. Come here where you can see better." He drew her off to a position where the faint light fell more obliquely on the quaint face and figure; the eyes did indeed seem looking with a sort of apprehensive stare. "It is not so notice-

able now, even to me," he decided, not finding the effect he looked for. "It is growing too dark. In this half light their eyes all seem to protrude, and it gives them a look as if they had some information in common they might impart if they would."

Eliza did not answer, at first. Rather an odd smile had come to the corner of her mouth, as if she found it humorous that he should have fancies, but they were all ready to go, and she hastened to the door.

"That gives one such an eerie sensation," she said, then, "it makes me wish to get out of their ken."

It was one of the loveliest of early autumn nights. What a velvety green world it seemed below, with a tinted evening sky above, with breaks in the blue, colorless, but of a pale brilliance, opening in and in. Eliza walked along, her movements giving out a gentle rustle, with the cadet grey silk gathered up over glimpses of filmy lace, her whole person exhaling a sort of a gala atmosphere, difficult to resolve into its elements, for she often wore the same gown to church, and her hair and few chiffons were simple enough. But, somehow, Nathaniel's face wore less and less of its set look as he fell in beside her on the gravel path, and his eyes occasionally were lowered to her graceful, burnoosed head.

"Yes, it gives one rather an uncomfortable feeling," said he. "I often have that sensation about the old Judge's picture, for instance, I know him to have been a fine old fellow, cut out on a good square pattern, and I should not like to be doing or thinking anything mean when those large eyes of his were following me."

"I didn't know you were susceptible to such impressions," Eliza said, smiling. "From what we



know of them, though," added she, "not many of them were people who in life one would need to dread reading one's secret thoughts."

"You remind me delicately that I haven't an ancestry to be wholly proud of. That is true. Some of them would make rather an assumption in judging anybody. But you know that the people with beams in their eyesight, though they are told not to, are the very ones to look for motes in their neighbor's eyes. The Dows, in the main, had more than their share of defects, and these not balanced by the generous qualities—generous vices, sometimes—that leaven more patrician shortcomings. There was always a strain of common earth in them, like the canals of their native Holland, clear enough on top, a smooth, sluggish stream made for utility, but with its own deep strata of mud at the bottom. In storms, it must be confessed that mud came to the surface. That is one reason why I do not want Dow House, even if I felt that I had any claims to it, which I do not. It is not a fortunate heritage. My aunt tells me that Frank was here this afternoon. Did you see him?"

The conversation thus naturally reverted to Frank and his prospects. Nathaniel had showed tact in opening up subjects which without being forced, yet helped to do away with the constraint that would otherwise have been inevitable between them. He was dignified, careful, courteous, the pleasant, thorough gentleman it was his nature to be, but nothing now told her he remembered the evening before; neither his anger at her rudeness, nor his gratitude for prompt and courageous action. Eliza was very meek and subdued, and moved along looking, under the burnoose of her

white shawl so exquisitely pensive that her companion, indifferent as he looked, as he strode by her side, was in reality filled with the weakest of relentings, and only longed that pride would permit him, if it lay in his power, to brighten that downcast face, and lift the head from its depressed and unconscious drooping, even should it be done at the sacrifice of what an artist would consider the penitential grace of her pose.

Mr. Casgrove's house was brightly lighted as they went up to it. Carriages were rolling up to the door, and leaving their occupants, while groups of people on foot were proceeding up the trim paths that led through the lawn. The walk with Nathaniel had done something to dispel Eliza's dislike to entering the crowded rooms, by rendering even the encounter with so many strangers a secondary consequence; and she had certainly never mingled in Setauket society under more favorable auspices. They were affably greeted by their host, and received with a gay warmth by Frank and Millie. The latter was everywhere, beautifully dressed in white, and as brilliant as a butterfly in a parterre, Frank said, appearing much amused at his wife's shining with such contrasted radiance against the dull background of the mixed provincial and suburban elite. "I verily believe Millie considers them a more intelligent variety of cabbages it pays to shine before," said he to Nathaniel, laughingly.

The evening was about like most such social affairs, a crush, with its comical or disagreeable side, as one chose to see it, or a delightful and memorable gathering, according to the "Setauket Daily Banner." The two foreigners, a stout Austrian with a full white moustache, and his



traveling companion, a youngish man who had been attached to one legation or another since his boyhood, and had been kept much of the time in Washington, were both well acquainted with the country, and in sympathy with their surroundings. They had been availing themselves for the last few days, in company with their host, of whatever sport or objects of interest the island afforded, from bluefishing off Montauk Point, to a glance at the antiquated quiet and picturesqueness of the Hamptons. These last furnished sketches for the pencil of the younger man, and their experiences, fresh and entertaining as they appeared to have been, had given them plenty of topics of conversation. Mr. Maas, a Swiss, was large, dark and thin, with a somewhat spotted face and wore glasses. He made himself a devoted shadow of the gay little Millie; while Eliza, after talking for some time with the short and elderly count, found herself, without knowing how she got there, looking at the rare and curious articles with which the room was so filled under the auspices of their distinguished host. To her relief, he proved to be a simple mannered, grey-haired man, with a face seamed and worn with the troubles of a rather sad domestic life, and the stirring and wearing excitements of a long public one. Frank and Nathaniel had gone off by themselves to talk, and especially to discuss the question of Jarvis Marshall's return, and of what step should be taken in regard to it.

"Confound the fellow!" Frank said. "I meant the first time I saw him to send him about his business. The miserable, cowardly sneak! I always thought he ought to be lynched."

"I came down tonight to carry out your mother's wishes," said Nathaniel, "and drive the

fellow to a statement. But when I found that we were coming over here I thought that it would be just as well to see you and get your ideas about it. I wanted to know what you thought best. Don't you think he ought to make her that reparation?"

Frank Dow still seemed to think this unwise.

"Why open up the subject?" said he, as he had told his mother. "I think it will be very exciting to Mother, and what end will be gained? I don't believe that anybody whose opinion she need care for connects the idea of guilt with her now, even if they ever did. There's not a woman more respected in Suffolk County than she. No, I'm not friendly to this idea at all. I don't advise it. Still, if she has set her heart on it, and you approve of it, of course, I shan't interfere."

After the rooms had thinned out and the greater part of the company had gone, Millie, relieved from the duties of entertaining, and still accompanied by Maas, came over where the two cousins sat together.

"I think it was all quite a success," said she, as she arranged the lilies in her corsage; the artificial atmosphere had wilted them until they drooped in the most artistically limp manner, so Maas said. "The people all seemed to enjoy themselves," continued Millie. "Don't you think so?"

Maas had stopped to pick up the fan she had dropped.

"As much as Americans ever do enjoy themselves, perhaps," he rejoined. There was an odd bright intelligence in the dark eyes behind his spectacles. "The people in this country do not know how to do that, I have often thought."



"Oh, Mr. Maas, I thought you liked America!" remonstrated she.

"Yes, so I do, but I think you have that grave fault, you and the English; but you are worse than the English. You will have to learn to enjoy as you grow older and wiser. It is there that your nation lacks. What do the most of you live for? I confess I don't see. You look forward too much. Herbert Spencer says that of you. And yet, so large an admixture of the German element ought to make a change in that in time, and I think it will."

"But we have something to look forward to," she objected. "We are not ground under tyranny, you know."

"Oh, yes, that tyranny! Yes, you have possibilities, but the present is something. Your own philosopher tells you that it is a king in the disguise of a beggar."

"But one ought not to live for mere enjoyment," said she, rather at a loss, but sticking to the old creed we all learn as patriotically as though she had not crossed the ocean a number of times. "We are too serious for that."

"Ah," said he, smiling, "but this is the real art of life. Don't you know what Horace said?"

"No," she confessed, shaking her head, "but Horace was an epicurean. Surely, you do not advocate his ideas?"

"I didn't know you were such a little Puritan," he laughed. "Now, see how it is: even a lively lady like yourself has this persuasion. But you are all tinctured with Puritanism. You are too conscientious. It is narrowing. You will find a golden mean, sometime."

Millie did not understand this as well as his compliments.

"That is the way all you strangers say, but I don't see that you show us anything better," she finished, with a slight, smiling pout. The two young men had been listening amused. She turned to Nathaniel. "I have something to tell you," said she, "that will surprise you. Nettie Stone is about to be married."

"That's an old story," said he, imperturbably, leaning back in his chair and looking up at her. "Can't you tell us news?"

"What, did you know it?" said she, rather chagrined. "I didn't suppose you did. Why didn't you tell me? I had heard some rumors—in fact, I knew she was engaged—but do you know, I'd got it into my head it was to you."

"Do you know you shouldn't get mere suppositions into your head?" said he, looking amused at her key of astonishment and pique. He spoke jestingly, but his eyes fell upon Eliza Jakway's face as she stood near examining some tiger's claws mounted in gold that Mr. Casgrove had brought from the East, and he was struck by the look of bright, surprised interest, by the sudden glow of relief, of hope, as it were, that lighted it. She was looking at him, but, as his eyes met hers she glanced away immediately, as if the crossing of their gaze had been a mere accident. It was only by a side flash of intuition, of revelation, that he connected that look of hers with the conversation that had just taken place. He looked at her again quickly, penetratingly, and this time he saw that she had grown a rosy red. He wondered about that look, that deep blush. A glow stole around his own heart as a possibility suggested itself to his conjectures, to his nerves. He joined only fragmentarily in the talk of the rest, while these speculations were filling his brain.



"That's so, little woman," Frank had said. "You're rather too apt to jump to conclusions."

"I plead guilty in this case," she told him. "What poor woman doesn't expect to be told that she's illogical? Of course, we are all always jumping to conclusions. As for Nettie, I am so vexed with her. I shall never forgive her. It is not friendly of her to keep me so in the dark."

Mr. Casgrove had made the tiger claws a pretext for the story of the hunt in which the animal had been captured, in which he had participated. Eliza listened apparently with the utmost interest. Her host was quite taken with her, while the sweetness of her look caught Maas' eye, gleaming through his spectacles. How lovely some of these American girls were, not only those in the whirl of fashionable life, but some of these wildwood flowers to be met with in out-of-the-way places!

As Eliza and Nathaniel started to go, the rest of them followed them out upon the lawn, to see if perchance they might see some of the shooting stars, of which there was rumored to be that night a fine display. The night was unusually fresh and fragrant, and the trees seemed to grow low and leave unembarrassed the high skies, thickly sown with the silvery orbs, beginning to pale their fires under the light of the rising moon. One exceptionally brilliant meteor rewarded them by slowly sailing down the purplish vault of the heavens.

They fell to discussing the phenomenon. Mr. Casgrove continued his conversation with Eliza.

"These planetary asteroids, or shooting stars, as I understand it, bring from the regions of space some electro-magnetic elements that excite this friction on reaching our atmosphere."

Eliza was thinking of her walk home with Nathaniel. Mr. Casgrove might as well have been talking Greek. She was not aware how cordially she accepted the invitation he extended to her to drive with himself and Mrs. Frank some day. It was a prospect that she would once have regarded with little else than horror.

"How strange it seems," said Frank, "that stellar heat cannot only be felt, but measured. It has been measured by the astronomers at Greenwich. They discover that those stars that emit a white or steely light give less heat than those with red rays."

"His soul was like a star and dwelt apart," soliloquised Millie. Maas looked at her as she stood with her face upturned to the night. It did not trouble Frank that there was a little flirtation going on here. Nathaniel was looking for the pleiades, the "Mariner's Stars" as they have been called from the rudest ages. He said they were his stars.

"Your lucky stars," said Frank, lightly. "I am glad if you have any."

"It is you who have those," said his wife.

Nathaniel had strayed away from the group in his impatience to be gone, and Eliza now joined him, saying goodnight to them all. Millie promised that she and Frank would be down the first thing in the morning. What had happened to Eliza as they started off? She was as gay as a lark, and it seemed to Nathaniel that he should never have an opportunity to speak. His chance came at last.

"Curious idea Millie got in regard to my friend, Miss Stone," he observed. "Did she ever say anything to you about it?"



"Yes, she told me some time ago that you were engaged to her, or that she thought you were. I told her I should congratulate you immediately, but, somehow, I never got the chance."

"Did you believe her? Could you believe her, Eliza?"

"Why not?" said she, in an unsteady voice.

"Why not? I should not think you would ask that? I don't believe I should have had so little faith in you. How could you think such a thing? All that you have seen of me would contradict such a report." But Eliza did not answer. "Eliza, be frank. Have I conducted myself toward you as an engaged man, or do you do me the injustice to suppose that is my idea of honor?"

"I have no great knowledge of how engaged men do conduct themselves," Eliza returned, tremulously. "But surely, we are taking it more seriously than the question warrants," with a great effort at ease and lightness. "I really meant to say something a little joking and pleasant—people often rally their friends on these reports—and you seem quite vexed."

"Vexed! What a word that is, in such a connection! You impeach my whole character, and then wonder that I am vexed! And that miserable little innuendo made you avoid me, made you treat me as you did last night, so that I scarcely closed my eyes after it; no wonder, when you thought me guilty of such baseness—such falsehood! Yes, that was the word you used, I remember it now. So that was the cause of your coldness?"

"Not quite that," confessed she, with agitation. "Or, at least, not that at all. I have no right to resent that. But Cousin Florence had

been talking to me and I was afraid had been talking to you. I didn't intend to be rude, though I know that I was. I had no motive," explained Eliza, confusedly, adding with more spirit, and an arch smile, "you know the only person we ever allow to act without a motive is ourselves."

"Ah, indeed, I suspected Aunt Florence's agency. Poor woman, she meant well enough. But I was determined I would know your motive in pushing me off so cruelly, for I was sure it was not caprice and that you must have one. Dearest, you know I love you, but you can little guess how deeply or truly. Eliza, I know I am a bold man to ask you, for I know you like solitude—"

"Oh, Mr. Dow, please don't! I was so horrid then," cried Eliza, but she did not withdraw the hand he held so firmly in his own.

"Quite horrid, Eliza," he assented, "but not Mr. Dow, if you please. Say 'yes, Nathaniel' to the question you wouldn't let me ask you, and you shall be forgiven for that speech, though I grant it was a very impolite one."

It is not necessary to record Eliza's answer, excepting to say that Nathaniel was not doomed to disappointed hopes. How overjoyed Mrs. Dow would have been had she known of this result. But alas! life is indeed fragmentary. Our dearest hopes and most earnest purposes are oftenest incomplete. Those words of Mrs. Fordyce's had been prophetic ones. It had been appointed by that power that governs and shapes all things, and that sets a boundary to our brief and troubled earthly existence, that she was never to know of this consummation of a dear desire, just as she was never to realize the wish to see her name cleared in the sight of all men from blot or stain,



never to know the comfort of feeling herself proved entirely innocent.

The night, for it was now near the small hours, was warm and pleasant, and the lovers strolled along slowly, and lingered long on the veranda, with the sound of the incoming tide in their ears. But there was a freshening breeze coming up as it turned toward morning, and Eliza shivered a little before they went in, parting in the hall. She left the close clasp of Nathaniel's arms, and with his kiss still warm upon her lips, ran up to her room with a light foot; but in passing Mrs. Dow's door, she stopped a moment, and laying her hand on the knob, stood listening. What a day of events it had been! It had not been so many hours before that the widow had come to her to share with her a matter of rejoicing, in the reconciliation with her son. It seemed to Eliza that she must make known her own happiness, must share with this kind and sympathetic friend the knowledge that she knew would give her so much satisfaction. A slight pang of regret at having so resented her interference and thrust aside her kindly intentions made her only the more anxious to do this. She waited a few moments, but hearing no sound within, she decided not to disturb her.

At breakfast time the next morning, as their mistress did not appear at her usual early hour, one of the maids was despatched to her room. The result struck a chill, as it was communicated quickly over the house, to every heart the old roof sheltered. Soon a sorrowful group stood sad and silent, excepting for the loud sob of the servants, as they wept and wrung their hands, and the more controlled grief of the others. Eliza had laid her head on the pillow, and mourned, in the first great

shock of surprise and sorrow; but her hand was in Nathaniel's firm, strong one as he stood beside her, and that clasp was full of help and solace. He must be all the more to her now that she had lost her friend and benefactress. Guilty or innocent before the world, the widow Dow lay dead.

The doctor had been there, and all necessary steps had been taken, and in the first bewilderment the passage of time had been scarcely noticed, when a carriage drew up at the gates of Dow House, and a laughing little lady in a flower-crowned hat, carrying a struggling white Pomerania dog, got out and walked up the gravel walk to the front steps. The dog was quite an armful, and her movements were further embarrassed by the gambols of Tiger, as he frisked and bounded by her side.

"Your big dog will eat up my poor little Tony. See, they are determined to fight! It is all I can do to hold him," said she to Eliza Jakway, as brought by the tumult, she appeared in the door. And it was thus that Mrs. Frank Dow came home to the house that was henceforth to be her own.

Eliza Jakway seemed to have grown in womanly dignity, in firmness of character in this one night. She acquitted herself well beneath the active responsibilities that had been laid upon her young shoulders. Messengers had already been despatched to Mr. Casgrove's, but had not reached there when Mrs. Frank left. As a consequence Frank almost immediately followed his wife. A notification to Captain Jakway had not been forgotten, and he soon joined the little band that gathered together in the hushed house, while the lovely September day was outside, with the low sun shining over the green fields, the dry leaves



blowing and rustling along the roads, the wind stirring in the branches. The links of kinship seemed to contract and bind them all more closely together in the presence of this closed life, appealing to them with all its unfinished pathos. Aunt Margaret had lived through a good many sudden shocks, a good many sorrows. She took it quietly. It was a month of tragedies. There were always three deaths in a neighborhood, she said.

There was a poignant regret in the feelings of some of them as they sat there, but those who had most need to feel remorse were of a nature and temperament to have it but brief. The life thus cut off in its pride and strength of womanhood seemed different now that it was ended. They saw the beauty of it as they had never seen it before; that sudden death had blended the stormy period of existence into singular and unlooked-for consistency, and rounded it into a sort of completeness. We may well talk of the perspectives of history, when we see so short a time work a transformation in our capacity of vision.

A profound sensation was caused later in the day when Jarvis Marshall's confession in the columns of the morning paper was read in connection with the fact of Mrs. Dow's sudden death, and the singular nature of the coincidence was fully realized. But the impression was intensified to a thrill of still deeper interest when the South Woods yielded up its grisly secret. "He told me he was going away on another voyage. I did not understand the poor fellow. It will be a long voyage," said Mr. Suydam. He lost no time in communicating with the family in regard to his own connection with the affair, for he had a document in his keeping of some importance to them. The

will of Jarvis Marshall had left his share in the stone quarry which he and Clinton Nicholls had owned together unreservedly to Florence Dow, "her heirs and assigns, forever," and it would naturally revert to Frank Dow, who was also the heir to the Dow estate. This was as Nathaniel would have it, and those of his name who counted upon his assistance in breaking the will of Thomas Dow and asserting a claim to the property found no support in their project. Frank Dow did not intend to come down into the country immediately, and Aunt Margaret and Eliza lived on there for a time. When the funeral was over, and they began to arrange their household, a new gardener was to be found, and it was decided to take back the penitent Sandy. Dr. Fordyce strongly advised this; as for that other, he never had had any idea of gardening, he said. Mrs. Dow never would hear of it, but he had always told her that.

Frank Dow has been successful in business, and Dow House is now so greatly modernized you would not recognize it. Eliza and Nathaniel were married in the spring. Captain Jakway, not to be outdone in sagacity by the other prophets, averred that he was not a particle astonished when he heard of their engagement.

"Yes," said the Captain, wisely, "I knew it. I ain't astonished. After I see two young people goin' round in the evenin' sort of catamaran fashion, I read the handwriting on the wall—I know what will come of it."

THE END















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